W. H. Fellows
1946

John Franklin
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Bilston

A

HISTORY OF BILSTON,

IN THE COUNTY OF STAFFORD.

A RECORD OF

Its Archæology, Ecclesiology, Parochialia, Folk Lore, and Bibliography.

WITH

COPIOUS EXTRACTS FROM THE PARISH REGISTERS.

BY

GEORGE T. LAWLEY

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BILSTON:
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY JOHN PRICE, MARKET PLACE.
1893.

To

Frederick Charles Perry, Esq., J.P.,

Deputy-Lieutenant,

An Ex-High Sheriff of the County of Stafford,

and

the only surviving male representative of one of the most ancient families of Bilston;

and to the

Rev. Charles Lee, M.A.,

Vicar of the Parish,

who has given the author unrestricted access to the parish registers, and to the ancient terrier book from which our frontispiece is taken, this History is respectfully

dedicated.

PREFACE.

A quarter of a century ago a small volume appeared, entitled, "A History of Bilston." That work has long been out of print, and copies being hard to procure, the author has issued the present volume, which is swollen to three times the size of the former one, by the accretion of much valuable historical material—the accumulation of many years research. The author appeals with confidence to the verdict of his readers, knowing that though, according to the aphorism of the poet, "'tis not in mortals to command success," he has done his best to deserve it.

Priestfield House,
Near Wolverhampton.

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THE HISTORY OF BILSTON.

CHAPTER I.

Bilston Before the Conquest.

ARCHÆOLOGY, which until recently scarcely deserved the name of a Science, has now—to use an analogue borrowed from the science itself—as clearly defined limits in the kingdom of knowledge as a Roman road in a conquered province of the Empire; and archæologists can travel within them with confidence, knowing whither they terminate. There are, however, many vicinal ways branching in various directions which have yet to be traced before a complete itinerary can be laid down of the whole region of archæology. Among these byeways, that leading to the etymology of place-names is perhaps the one shrouded most in doubt and uncertainty. Many have been the flounderings of explorers in its bogs and morasses, and too frequently rash or amusing surmises have been made to do duty for actual and certain knowledge. The subject offers strong temptations for wandering, and archæologists may be excused for occasionally turning aside,—like Christian, into the more flowery region of "Bypath meadows"—so long as they do not set themselves up as dogmatic and infallible guides.

The difficulties surrounding the origin of place-names generally are present in the case of the name of Bilston. These difficulties are traceable to three principal causes; viz., to the successive invasions of the country by Saxons, Danes, and

Normans; to the similarity in mediæval times of many written characters; and lastly to the carelessness of the monkish chroniclers before the invention of printing. To this last mentioned cause may be attributed many of the variations observable in the spelling of place-names—contemporary documents frequently showing both the unsettled condition of the language and the absence of responsibility for accuracy on the part of the scribes. How these causes have operated on the name of Bilston will be presently seen. The first documentary mention of Bilston occurs in Lady Wulfruna's Charter, which she granted to the Church at Wolverhampton in the year of our Redemption 996.* In Dr. Oliver's Copy the name is spelled "Bilsitneituna" and "Bilsetnetunensis," an elaborate Latinism for which the Dr. rather than the scribe is responsible. Mr. Duignan, in his translation of the same charter, gives the less corrupt form of "Bilsretatun." In the autograph letter which Sigeric, a Saxon Archbishop wrote to Wulfruna on the subject of the endowment of Wolverhampton Church, we have the undoubtedly correct Latinism of Belstona.† The next earliest mention of Bilston occurs in Doomsday—that most priceless of all national documents—in which the name is written "Billestune"—a compromise of Latin and Anglo-Saxon—and such is the spelling as it appears in Edward III's charter, which will be subsequently referred to. In an old deed of the time of Henry IV. we have the spelling "Byllestone," in another dated 26 Henry 6th we have it preserved as "Byllyston," while subsequently there have been such variants as "Bylstune," "Bylston" and "Bilson," until it has become finally crystallised into "Bilston."

The *derivations* of place-names are divisible into three broad classes, viz:—those derived from some natural feature in the position of a town, such, for instance, as Staff-ford, Weald-Heale

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* There is some doubt existing respecting the actual date of this charter. Archbishop Sigeric, one of the Signatories died in November, 994, so that either 996 is the wrong date, or else the grant was delayed for some time after the signing of the charter.

† Dr. Oliver's transcript of Sigeric's letter was taken from a copy of the original document, made in the 17th century, and deposited in the Registry at Windsor. The whereabouts of the original is not known.

(Walsall) or "the palace of the wood"; the second derived from the names of their owners, such as Wolverhampton, or Wulfrune's Hamtune; Ettingshall, so called from an old English family, named "Ettings," who once held the manor of Stow Heath; and the third, from events which have occurred in their immediate neighbourhood, as Willenhall or "Winehala," a victory; and Wednesfield, signifying a battle field, or the field of Woden, the Anglo-Saxon god of war.

While these cover pretty well the whole ground of topographical nomenclature, it is certain that there are many instances in which arbitrary causes have given rise to place-names, and Bilston is one of these. We may dismiss with a smile the guess of one writer, who supposed that Bilston was derived from "bill," an agricultural implement, and "stone," from the quarries of stone within the township, famous for the fineness of its grit and suitability "for grinding purposes"—a definition worthy to rank with Horne Tooke's derivation of Pepin, the name of a famous French King, which in his *Diversions of Purley* he amusingly makes out as follows:—"Pepin is derived from a Greek word osper, thus transposed, osper, eper, oper, diaper, napkin, nipkin, pipkin, pepin"—a cutting satire on the guesses of ignorant etymologists. The laws of etymological derivation are fortunately becoming more certain and accurate, and much light has of late been thrown upon obscurities of nomenclature. Dr. Oliver, a learned, though very diffuse, writer, tells us in his *History of Wolverhampton Collegiate Church* that Bilston is derived from "Beli" the principal male divinity of ancient Britain, who was none other than Hu, or the Sun—the Apollo in fact of classical mythology, who was worshipped by the Druids, and in whose honour the midsummer-eve festival of "Bel-tein" was celebrated. Dr. Oliver does not give any evidence in support of his supposition, yet a little examination serves to confirm his opinion. In the first place we have the name written by Sigeric "Belstona," in which form the name of the god appears distinctly, in the second place there are evidences extant of the existence of a Saxon temple* founded by Oswy, King of Mercia,

* This Temple was afterwards given by Lady Wulfruna to the Temple at Wolverhampton.

on the occasion of his victory over the army of Penda, King of Northumberland—at Bilston, dedicated to the "Sun," and given to the See of Lichfield, but which, on the accession of Wulfere to the Mercian throne, became a royal possession—while thirdly Bilston was situated in the very heart of the Druidical retreats, only six miles from Great Barr, and Aldridge, the summer residence of the Arch Druid; within a mile and a half of Beacon Hill, anciently called "Druid's Hill," on whose summit, oak crowned, the Druids are traditionally believed to have offered up their sacrifices. In this opinion Mr. Duignan, an able local antiquary partially concurs: He says, "I know of no better etymology of Bilston than the Gaelic *Beal-tuinn,* the fire of Bel, Baal, or Bil, the great Gaelic God; but this derivation is so awful that I suggest it in fear and trembling." Assuming then the origin of the first half of the word Bilston to be as stated, the termination "tona" or "ton" becomes easy of explanation—it being in fact nothing more than the Saxon word "tynan;" a town or dwelling-place. Bilston therefore becomes a place-name full of strange significance, calling up pictures of antiquity of absorbing interest, for it literally means the "village of the sun," or the "village of sun worship."

At the time that the town emerges from pre-historic darkness it was a very tiny village, consisting of a few swine-herds' mud huts surrounding the stockaded residence of the Saxon possessor. It was situated in a thick wood* which extended up to the summit of the Sedgley Beacon, and lay on the edge of Cannock Forest, though not within the forest boundary, which lay a little to the east, and ran from Wednesfield to Wednesbury, both of which were within the area of Cannock forest. The charter of Lady Wulfruna to the Monastery of Wolverhampton gives a very interesting account of this district at that remote period, and is valuable for the clearness of its topographical descriptions. The portion relating to Bilston runs thus:—"*Hi sunt Bilsetnetunensis et Wodnesfeldenses. Primõ ab Hinde-broca (i.e. cervæ rivulo, fortè)*

* This is shown by the following extract from the autograph of Archbishop Sigeric respecting the endowment of Wolverhampton Church by Wulfruna. The letter refers to *"quintus quercus,"* and to the vast woods bearing great quantities of acorns *"triginta porcorum glandationes apud Scipricgam (sylvam forte glandiferam), ita nominatum," &c.*

in fossam inter Ettingeshalem (aulem, fortè, sic dictam) et Bilsetnetunam, in longam fossæ prorsus usque ad locum ubi fossa vergit en orientem, et a fossa prorsus ad spinetum illud ubi tres termini, Hantuniensis (scilicit) et Ettingeshalensis et Bilsetnetunensis conveniunt, et a spineto in irriguum lacum, et a lacu in vadum ubi Beorgitha viam lapideam transeunt, et a vado in fossam quæ jacet inter Wednesfeldæ at Hamtunæ limites, et ad aquilonem vadi per fossam in Piatæ spinetum," &c., &c. This Dr. Oliver translates as follows :—"commencing at "Hind Brook" or "Stag River,"* the boundary line continued straight along the ditch between Ettingshalem—where stood a large Saxon manor-house—and Bêlstonâ, until it turned off at an angle eastward towards a thorn-bush, where was placed a landmark to shew the junction of Bêlstonâ, Ettingshalem, and Wulfrunehamton. It then proceeded to a remarkable overflowing pool, and onward to the ford where Beorgitha's paved road crosses the stream; thence along the ditch which separates Wulfrunehamton from Wodnesfelde, to Goldthorn—Holythorn, SANCTUM SPINETUM—thence to the ditch on the road to Penn (VIAM) to the boundary where Wulfrunehamton, Bishbyrie, and Wodnesfelde meet in an angle. From this point the line proceeded along the Burgesses' River to a grove of alders; thence through Wodnesfelde, to the old Village (of Bêlstonâ,) by the miry road where the herds of swine are nightly folded in buildings erected for that purpose; thence to the fosse of Kunesford by the military road, to the bridge of white stones, and onward to the Virgin's Ferry; thence down the river until it arrived at the point where the survey commenced."

The Saxon Hall *("aulem, forté sic dictum")* above mentioned was in all probability erected by Kerdic Wolfeard, a favourite of King Ethelwolf. During his lifetime the Danes became troublesome, and Kerdic had more than once to go out against them. He caused a strong stockade and ditch to be made round his hall, and across this threw a rude moveable drawbridge,

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* This stream passed through Bilston, and thence eastward through Willenhall, where it joined the Tame, then called Beorgitha's stream. The bed of this stream was discovered a few years ago, in digging out the foundations for some buildings at the latter town.

diverting one of the watercourses that flowed through the scene into his ditch, so as to provide it with a supply of water. In the time of his son and successor, Kenwolf, the Danes again invaded the district, and in the year 909 carried on extensive plundering and burning, till they were met on Stow-Heath, near Bilston, where a terrible battle took place between them and the Saxons under Edward the Elder, who completely defeated them. Kenwolf from the hall here fought under the King, and performed many gallant exploits, but did not survive to wear his laurels. The estate of Swinestam, as Ettingshall was anciently called—viz., the place of swine keeping*—soon after fell into the hands of a family named "Ett." To this was added the usual tribal patronymic "ing"—meaning a family, and "hall" a residence, and these put together gave the name Ett-ings-hall, or the residence of the family of Ett. This family was in all probability dispossessed by William the Conqueror, and as no later evidence of this Hall exists it was probably then destroyed, and its owners made serfs.

About the year 1760 a very interesting relic of this building was discovered. During some mining operations the workmen found a vaulted passage of stone work, about fifty feet in length by four feet in breadth, which they explored. In this passage several curious implements were found, among them a two-edged axe,** bearing in Saxon capitals the name "Cedric Wolfeard." Unfortunately, the workmen ignorant of the value of the implements, took no care of them, and the axe was taken home by one of the men and used as a wood-chopper. The passage was also destroyed, without affording the antiquary an opportunity of examining it.

In the 10th century, Bilston and the neighbourhood formed a retired district abounding in woods and streams, and was inhabited by a pastoral population which was employed in swine-herding and

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* The reason for their being so numerous at this place may be attributed to an ancient custom, which obliged the tenants of manors to send their swine and cattle to the land of their lords, at a certain period of the year, that it might be made more fit for the plough.

** The axe must have been one of those known as "*Securis Danica*," which had been introduced into England a few years previous to the time of Wolfeard.

agriculture. The woods were well stocked with deer, boars, and other animals, affording abundant sport for the regal-hunters who often spent many days successively—when the bloody hand of Mars was resting—in the stirring "chase of hart and hare." Through the old village ran a Roman military road, a mighty proof of the superiority of those hoary Roman soldiers who had done battle for the conquest of the then known world. To the south, the ground gently sloped for the distance of a mile, at which point a clear sparkling stream wound its peaceful way, marking in its course some of the boundaries of the village. To the north, as far as Monmore, a beautiful sylvan forest stretched away in all the majestic grandeur and sublime repose of a new creation, and from the top of its noblest monarch could be seen the square, ivy-mantled tower of Wulfrune-Hampton Church; excepting which, and the turreted hall of the Saxon chieftains, few habitations were to be seen. To the west, from the same observatory, the range of the "Beacon" and Sedgley Hills was plainly seen, and still further on, the "Wren's Nest," and the newly raised battlements of its chieftain "Dudo." The Druid's Altar, as the Beacon Hill was then called, was crowned with a garland of Nature's own weaving, and under the noble shelter of its luxuriant foliage the Druid priests had oft performed their mystic rites. Midway in the valley, was the famous spring, called "Lady Wulfruna's," which gave the name "Springvale" to the valley. To the east was Winehala, or Willenhall; the silvery waters of the Hindbrook occasionally flashed in the sunlight, until it reached the "bridge of white stones" over by the military way, when it became lost to view in the mazes of the forest. Willenhall itself was also hidden behind the columns of the stately trees, with no other indication of its existence than the fantastic curlings of the smoke, which arose among the foliage and floated in the dreamy atmosphere.

Of the history of Bilston, previous to the Norman conquest, nothing more is now known. Though no evidences exist in the shape of

"Massive ruins, ivy clad, and grey with age,"

to remind us of its infancy, and but few waifs and strays of information in the chronicles of those remote and barbaric ages to inform us of our rude forefathers; yet, there are several

circumstances which survive the "smiting hand of time" that, like solitary footmarks in the snow, lead us to those early times and demonstrate to us even by themselves that the origin of this town dates from the first ages of the christian era. In the first place, we have seen that a temple dedicated to the sun was erected here, where the mystic rites and ceremonies of a patriarchal priestcraft were celebrated; that according to Lady Wulfruna's charter a village existed, which even in the 10th century was described as the OLD village of Bilsretatun; that a Roman military road, which, wherever practicable, took in the British villages, so as to overawe them, passed through the OLD village; and Roman coins of the reigns of Commodus and Antoninus, in a beautiful state of preservation, have been found. Composed probably of rude mud huts, and inhabited by the fierce and warlike Cornarvii, the village would, in the fierce forays between them and the Roman soldiers, fall into decay, while they hid themselves in the surrounding woods Conquered at last they returned to their huts, and under their conquerors learned the first lessons of civilized life. When the Saxons became masters of the island we find that some of them came and resided here, so that in time the inhabitants from being savage and warlike, became accustomed to a more pastoral life, living chiefly on the produce of the chace and the flesh of the swine that fed in the woodland glades, and were nightly folded at Swinsetam, that portion of the township now known as Ettingshall. In the neighbouring chace of Cannock, which then extended to Bilston, both Saxon and Norman Kings indulged in their passion for hunting, and the cries of their hounds and the blasts of their horns have also rung in the woodlands of Bilston, which were from an early period in demesne, or part of the crown possessions, until the latter part of the 10th century. That portion of the township within the manor of Stow Heath was then granted to Lady Wulfruna, who granted it to the Canons of Wolverhampton, in whose hands it remained until the Norman Conquest, when it again fell into the hands of the Crown, but whether alienated by the Canons themselves, which was not very probable, or had been seized by the King, which was much more likely, is not now certainly known. On this point we have a statement made by Erdeswick, in his Survey of the County, which is certainly an error. He tells us that "in the 20th year of William the Conqueror (1086) Bilston belonged

to the Canons of Wolverhampton, and was incorporated by charter by Lady Wulfruna with the Church of Wolverhampton, the Canons of which received the tithes." Erdeswick must have overlooked the positive evidence of Doomsday Book on the point, which as will be seen in the next chapter shows that Bilston was then in the hands of the King. Shaw, in his *History of Staffordshire*, comes much nearer the actual truth, though even his statement which follows is not strictly accurate. He says that "Bilston is one of those Vills given by that noble Lady Wulfruna to the Monastery of St. Mary at Wolverhampton ..... but at the time of the Conquest the Canons had not much (land) here, the greater part of the Vill being in the King's hands, and as I suppose then, as now it is, in the Manor of Stow-Heath, for in the time of King Edward the Third (A.D. 1326) the men and tenants of Billestune are certified to be free of toll, because the Vill was of the ancient demesne of the Crown." If we insert "not any" for Shaw's phrase "not much" we shall have an exact statement of this important fact.

CHAPTER II.

The Doomsday Entries.
The Early History of the Church Considered.

THE Norman Conquest practically constitutes the boundary line which separates legendary from authentic history. The Dom-Boc, or Doomsday book, is of so surprising a character, is so full of information respecting the condition of the land, and the habits, customs, and extent of the population, is, in fact, so unique in itself as to be sufficient to give point to the observation, and definiteness to the work of the historian, whether he be desirous of eliciting facts relating to parochial or to national affairs. Edward I. has been justly described for his excellent laws the "English Justinian," but William the Conqueror may with equal appositeness be called the Norman Cæsar, for while he conquered and enslaved England, he left behind him a more valuable record of the conquered land than the Commentaries of the Roman emperor. The importance of the Doomsday Book it would be difficult to overestimate, for though errors and omissions occur in its time-honoured pages, which our limited knowledge of its exegesis does not permit us always to understand, it is confessedly a marvellous picture of England in the 11th century, such as no other country in the world possesses. Turning to its pages, for happily owing to the application of Photo-zincography to the copying and printing of manuscripts, copies of this national record are within easy reach of every provincial antiquary; we find under the heading of Staffordshire, the following entries relating to the several portions of the township of Bilston.

"In Billestune sunt II hidæ. Tra-e-IIII. car. Ibi sunt VIII. villi et III. bord. cu III. car. Ibi 1 ac. pti silui dimid leuu lg et dimid lat. Valuit XX sol, modo XXX sol."

Freely translated, it is as follows:—"In Bilston there are two hides of land, which is four caracates, and there are eight villains and three bordarers with three ploughs. Also one acre of meadow land. The wood is about a furlong long and a half broad. Was worth 20s., now 30s.

For Ettingshall we have the following entry:—

"Isd-W-ten in Etinshale II. hidæ et Robt. de eo. Turstan tenuit en saca et soca. Tra-e-IIII. car. In dnio sunt II. ac. et IX vill et III bord cu II ploughs. Ibi V ac. pti Silua ht III qrent in lg et lat. Valuit et val XXX sol."

The meaning of this extract is as follows:—"The same William (Fitz Ansculfi) holds in Ettingshall 2 hides, and Robert de Thurstan holds the same of him by sac and soc. There are 4 caracates. In demesne are 2 acres, and 9 villains and 3 bordarers with 2 ploughs. There are 5 acres of meadow, having a wood 3 furlongs in length and breadth. Valued and now of the value of 30 shillings."

The entry relating to Bradley is as follows:—

"Walbert ten de W. 1 hid: in Bradelee. Tra e. II car: Ibi IIII villi hnt 1 car. Silvi III q. lg et una q. lat. Valuit et val. LXIIII denar: Untan tenuit en saca et soca. Ibi II ac pti."

This may be translated thus:—"Walbertus holds of William (Fitz Ansculf) one hide in Bradley. There are II caracates, with them are 4 villains having one plough. The wood is 3 furlongs long and one furlong broad. Valued and now of the value of 67 pence. Untan holds by sac and soc. There are 2 acres of meadow land."

It is but fair to say that the Bradley here described is rubricated as being in Offlow Hundred, but that does not prove that it refers to another Staffordshire Bradley, of which there are three. Manors and portions of manors are in many instances

wrongly inserted, as for instance William Corbucion's manor of Sibeford, is inserted in the Staffordshire portion of Doomsday, though it was really in Oxfordshire, while the manor of Essington in Staffordshire is entered also in Warwickshire. These errors the well-known antiquary, the Rev. R. W. Eyton, attributes to the fact that the Exchequer clerks who made the entries in Doomsday were different from those who made the various surveys, and on that account occasionally got the transcripts mixed up. Certain it is that the Bradley entry above quoted does not refer either to Bradley in the moors, or to Bradley-green.

These extracts from the Doomsday Book prove, at once, that Bilston is far more ancient than it is generally supposed to be; and though the population according to that book (which it should be remembered only gives the number of the serfs or labourers) is very small, yet comparing the population of the country at that time, it was by no means insignificant. It must be borne in mind that so late as the reign of Henry III, the population of Wolverhampton was only about 300, and it was considered so important a place that that king granted the inhabitants a charter, permitting them to hold an annual fair. Indeed, if we compare Bilston with some of the towns around at that time, it will be seen to go beyond them in the number of its inhabitants.

It will be observed that no mention is made in these extracts to any church existing within the township or its members. We find neither "Ecclesia" nor "presbyter." But this must not be taken as absolute proof that a church did not exist then. That a church of some sort existed in the time of King Oswy, though of a Pagan character, we have already mentioned, and that it would not be allowed to entirely disappear is probable. The practice of the early christians was not to do away entirely with Pagan temples, or their rites and ceremonies, but in order to win over the heathens to Christianity, Christian practices were grafted upon ancient superstitions, and permitted for a time to grow together. The less offensive tenets of idolatry were permitted to remain, their temples converted to Christian Churches by the removal of the idols and the erection of altars, while their sacrificial festivals were gradually made to coincide with the Christian feasts. Many Saxon temples

therefore existed till the Conquest, but had gradually lost all, or nearly all traces of their Pagan origin. Why no record of Bilston Church appears in Doomsday book may be due to the fact that during the fierce struggles between Saxons and Normans for the sovereignty of England, the church, like hundreds of others, may have been destroyed, the Midland and Northern Counties having bitterly opposed the Norman rule for years after the Southern Counties had been entirely subjugated. Until the Conqueror had seated himself firmly on the throne, and his lords had secured to themselves their newly acquired lordships, which they did by means of the most brutal and unrelenting character, no thought was given to the erection of manorial churches; and it was not till the latter end of the Conqueror's reign that the rage for church building commenced. But all through the remainder of the eleventh century the demesne lands of the Crown were generally left uncared for, and their peasantry had either to go without the ministrations of religion, or seek it at the hands of the nearest priest. Bilston, however, was favoured in this respect, for whether on account of it having once been a portion of the church possessions at Wolverhampton, or because that church was in the hands of Sampson called Clericus in Doomsday—who, according to Dr. Wilkes, the Willenhall antiquary, was a relative of the Conqueror, and would on that account have a greater interest in the demesne lands of the Crown—a chapel of some sort was erected, and Robert Fitz Stephen, *pro Sampsoni Capellano,* was its priest. * We know no more of this priest than that he was one of the first of a series who were notorious for the irregularity of their lives, so much so that in 1190, Petrius Blesensis, or Peter of Blois, who was then Dean of Wolverhampton, determined to put an end to the disgrace. On this subject Huntsbach in his Mss says—"The great privileges which this Church and free chapels enjoyed by grants of the several

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* Erdeswick gives the following copy of the Charter *granting Wolverhampton* Church to Samson. *"W. Rex Anglorium, L. archiepiscope, et lg episcope Cestrensi et P. episcope et R. Vicecomiti cæterisque suis fidelibus de Estaffordscire salutem. Sciatis ime dedisse Sampsoni capellano meo ecclesiam sanctæ Mariæ de Wolverhamtonâ cum terra et omnibus aliis rebus et consuetudinibus sicut mœlius prædicta Ecclesia habuit tempore regis Edwardi. Et videte quod hæc omnia honorificè teneab quoniam benè volo."*

Kings made the Canons so enormous in their lives that Petrius Blesensis made great complaints of them to the King, and the Archbishop of Canterbury sent threatening letters to them. But all proved ineffectual by reason of their dependence upon the Apostolic See being such, that nothing could be done without the special license of the Pope. Whereupon the said Blesensis resigned his Deanery into the hands of the Archbishop." The dependence here alluded to was that arising out of a bull granted by the Pope, in which it was stated—that no sentence of interdiction or excommunication should be pronounced against the said church and free chapels, without the special license or concurrence of his Holiness under pain of the displeasure of God and the Apostle St. Peter. The Archbishop of Canterbury however, had sufficient weight and influence to expel the Canons, whom he replaced by an establishment of regulars of the Cistercian order.

Up till this time the priests of Bilston seem to have been connected with the Church of Wolverhampton, and the chapel may have been included in the general term of "free chapels" associated in charters with the church. But that it was never entirely incorporated with the Church at Wolverhampton is undoubted, for the simple reason that Bilston still remained in the possession of the Crown until the time of Henry II, when according to the Norman Rolls that King granted the woods and land south of Wolverhampton, from time immemorial demesne of the Crown, comprising 3 hydes and 1 caracate, to one Roger Wascellin. For what services this grant was made we are not informed, but it was probably a gift for some military services.

In the 6th year of King John, according to the same Rolls, that monarch seized all the land held by Normans in England, in retaliation for similar conduct on the part of the French King. By this act many estates came into the hands of the King as escheats under the name of "Terra Normanorum," or land of the Normans. In consequence of this Bilston passed from the possession of Roger Wascellin, and became once more a demesne of the Crown. This ownership naturally affected the relationship between the chapel at Bilston and the church at Wolverhampton, so that while most of the villages of the district over which

the Canons exercised ownership subsequently became prebendal appendages to the Collegiate Church, Bilston never became such an appendage. On this account Bilston Chapel never figures in the charters and documents relating to the Deanery, until the time of the founding of the Chantry of St. Leonard's in the 15th century. Even when the Manor of Stow Heath was granted to the Deanery in exchange for the Manors of Mere, Swinford and Clent, in the year 1200, Bilston is not mentioned in the charter. Indeed, Bilston remained in demesne until the 49th of Henry III, when that King granted the lands belonging to the Crown in Bilston to Walter de Bilston, for his valour at the battle of Evesham. In the reign of King John the King's tenant in Bilston was Simon Fitz Hubert, for in the great Roll of that period we have this entry "To Simon Fitz Hubert of Billestune the King oweth 15 marks for six grey falcons: we therefore command that our Shrieve do pay the same out of the Exchequer."

With the grant of the demesne lands to Walter de Bilston this town became finally severed from the Crown.

CHAPTER III.

Bilston and its Dependencies during the Middle Ages.

EXCEPT for the few entries in the Public Records, very little documentary evidence now remains to throw light upon the history of the town during the twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The same complaint of paucity of materials applies as much to national as to parochial history, and but for the publication of the Rolls of the Exchequer—a work which has only been undertaken within the present century—local history during this darkest period of literary barrenness would have been little more than a blank. The demand for increased historical information, and the activity and zeal displayed by antiquaries led to the publication of the national manuscripts, which were fast perishing from neglect, mildew, and decay, and thereby opened to the historical student, the genealogist, and the antiquary, a priceless store of information, such as the historians of the last century never suspected, or, if suspected, could not avail themselves of. The oldest preserved document, next to the Doomsday book, is the Pipe Roll of the 31st year of Henry I, in which the revenues of the Crown and the fines, escheats, and rents of assize are recorded. These Rolls have been digested under the heads of Counties, and are now available through the publications of the Record Commissioners, and the various county archæological Societies.

The earliest entry in these Rolls relating to Bilston is the following for the 19th year of Henry II, anno 1172-3, under the heading of—

"De Assisâ facta per Johannem de Dovra et socios suos."

"Idem Vicecomes r.c. (reddit compotum) de XLs de Billistan de assisâ. In th'ro lib E. Q. E." (et quietus est). That is to say, John de Dover and his fellow commissioners assessed a tax called an Assize of 40/- upon the King's demesne of Bilston. The amount is paid into the treasury, and the demand satisfied.

The next entry occurs in the Pipe Roll of 23rd Henry II, 1186-7, as follows:

"Idem Vicecomes r.c (reddit compotum) de XXXVIs de dono de Billeston. In th'ro XVIIIs et debit XVIIIs." That is to say the same Sheriff levied upon the men of Bilston a tallage or assize of 36/- They have paid 18/- into the treasury, and owe 18/-" This entry appears under the heading of "Vetus Dominiorum Coronæ," i.e. Ancient demesne of the Crown.

In the Roll for the following year 1187-8, we have this entry: "Homines de Billeston debent XVIIIs de dono," that is to say the "men of Bilston owe 18/- as tallage."

A similar item occurs in the following year. In the Pipe Roll of 2nd Richard I, 1189-90 we have this entry:—

"Homines de Billestonâ reddunt compotum de XVIIIs de Dono. In operatione prædicta XVIs per Hugonem Bardulf per prædictum breve et debent IIs.

In the same Roll for the following year 1190-1 we have:—

"Et de IIs de hominibus de Billestunâ"—which entry occurs under the heading of "De Tallagiis Dominiorum et Terrarum Regis." Thus far as regards Bilston. Turning to Bradley we find that in the year 1166 William Fitz Guy, of the Barony of Dudley, held Orton, (near Penn) Oxley, (near Wolverhampton) and Bradley, with half of Seisdon by the service of one Knight's fee. In the hands of this Guy however, these lands did not long remain, for having joined with his mesne lord, Gervase Paganel, against the King he was dispossessed, and the land given to Walter de Overton. According to an original deed in the possession of Lord Wrottesley, this Walter de Overton in the year 1200 held a Knight's fee under the Barony of Dudley, at Orton and Bradley. At an Inquisition upon the lands of Roger de Somery, Lord of Dudley,

held in the 20th of Edward I, the jury returned that William de Overton, grandson of the the above Walter held of Roger Somery, Womborne, Overton, Oxeley and Bradley, by the service of two Knight's fees.

In the Staffordshire Pipe Roll of 21st Hen: II, 1174-5, we have the following entry relating to the other portion of the Township:—"Et de j.m. de Tedinga de Ettingshal pro plegio Radulphi."

That is to say the Commissioners had received one mark from Tedinga of Ettingshall for a pledge for the good behaviour of Randulph. This Tedinga must at that time have held some part of the land at Ettingshall, but for what offence he thus stood bond we are not informed, though it is likely to have been one against the forest laws, which were then very severe.

In the Plea Rolls of the Reign of Henry III, that is to say, the pleas held before the Itinerant Justices of the Crown, we have the following complaint made in the 12th year of the aforesaid King's reign:—

"The men of the Lord the King of Bilestun complain that Juliana, the widow of Roger de Benetlega (Bentley), and her son, had erected buildings in the wood of the Lord the King at Benetlega, and destroyed the wood, where the aforesaid men were accustomed to have husbote and heybote* and other necessaries by the view of the Forester, and the said Juliana and her son did not permit them now to enter the said wood." How the plea was answered we have no entry to show.

This and subsequent entries, which will be given when we come to deal with the ancient owners of the township, prove clearly enough that the district even up to the fourteenth century was still mostly covered with woods, the chief occupation of the population being swine and cattle feeding, and that the people were seldom disturbed in their employment, except when they had to follow their

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* Husbote I take to mean faggots for the domestic hearth, and heybote grass for the cattle.

lords to battle, as the King's exigencies demanded. On three occasions we have it on record that Bilston men went forth to do battle under the royal banner. In the first instance, we find that the men of Bilston fought under the King's banner at the Battle of Evesham in 1265, their leader being Walter de Bilston, Knight, the latter obtaining for his valour a grant of the demesne lands in Bilston, until then from the time of the Conquest belonging, except for a brief period, to the Crown.

In the second case, John de Bilston led them forth, on a summons from Edward I, whom they attended, when that monarch invaded Scotland. In the third instance they fought under Edward III's standard in France, and so well did they do their *devoirs* that the King granted the town a charter, in the following terms.

"Ex mero motio * Edwardus III, dei gratia, rex Angli, France, dux de Normandy, &c., to all his loving subjects, greeting. Be it known, that we hereby declare all Bilston men (our most dutiful subjects) to be free from tolls, rents, wards, courts, and all other customs of earthly servitude, throughout our realm (saving and excepting to our Majesty) from henceforth, in consideration of its being anciently a demesne of the crown. To our valiant subject William de Bilston we entrust this our sovereign will.

Signed, Edwardus rex."

This important document, says Mr. Ames, "passed into the hands of the Mollesleys on their union with the de Bilston family, but of late I have not been able to trace it to the proper owner."

From a deed of surrender dated 2nd Richard II, (1378) we learn that one Sir Wm. Poort was priest of Bilston, for in the deed Thomas Robyns and Juliana his wife do give to Sir Wm. Poort ye priest of Bilston and John Robynns jointly, one messuage, one water mill, &c. For a herriot, was given one cow valued at 6/8 and for admittance 8/-

At the commencement of the reign of Richard II nearly the

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* These words were used in Royal Charters of that period to show that the King acted on his own freewill.

whole of the township remained unenclosed. In a deed dated 1378; 1st Richard II, Juliana late wife of Thomas Robyns de Bilston gave to her son William a certain parcell of meadow ground in feodo de Bradley in *"quandam campo vocat Bovebroke field."* This deed was witnessed by John Mollesley de Bilston and dated at Bilston.

The Rev. Richard Ames tells us that Bradeley was but partially enclosed in the 19th of Edward 4th (i.e. 1479) as appeared from a deed which he had seen, while he also tells us "that all those meadows at ye bottom of ye New Lunt were taken in and enclosed *since* Queen Mary's time, and that when they all lay together unenclosed they went by ye name of Broad meadows."

A curious document without date, but belonging to the early part of the 15th century, gives us an insight into the condition of Bilston, and proves it to have been inhabited by a few families of importance, their dependants and servants making at that time a population of something like 200 persons. In the Ames' register of the Church we have the following copy of the document in question. "Anc'tly," says Mr. Ames by way of explanation, there *was* reckon'd (and still there *is*) in Bilston 15 Tenements, ye owners whereof do according to custome collect ye Lord's chief rent yearely, in their appointed turns, and by an old scroll of Parchment (now, (1698) in ye possession of Edw'd Perry) wt-out date ye order is placed thus, as you may see by ye true coppy of ye sd Parchment wch here follows :—

"Thys tellyth who shal be Balys yn Bylston."

Imprimis.

Thomas Kemson.
Thomas Tonkys.
Thomas Kemson.
Thomas Tonkys.
Ihon Marston. } Thos. Linton is (I conceive) their
Ihon Marston. } successor.
Richard Tonkys.
Thomas Tonkys.

Nicholas Wylkys. Roger Stoaks is sd to be ye p'prietor of his Tenement.

Ihon Pipe.

Ihon Pyrrye. Ancestor I suppose of Mr. Perry of ye Croft.

Ihon Foxall. At ye house Thos. Perry (locksmith) now lives at with others.

Nicholas Robyns.

Thomas Pyrrye. Ancestor to those of ye Corner House.

Robert Molesley, p'prietor of ye House where Jon. Wooley now lives belonging to ye Moseleys of Moseley.

Other references to Bilston during the middle ages will be found in the chapter on the principal families.

CHAPTER IV.

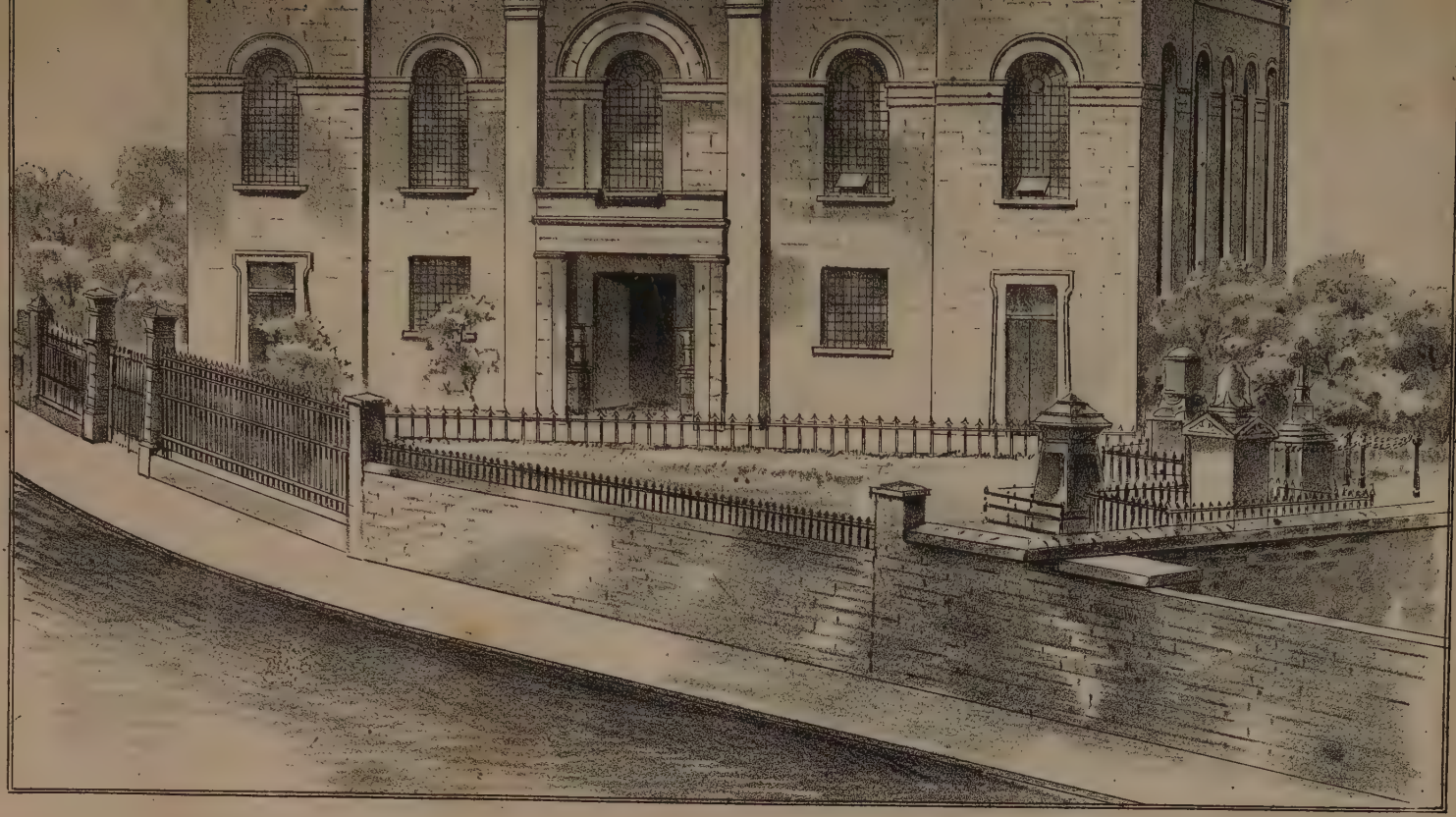
The Founding of St. Leonard's Chantry. Its Dissolution, &c.

IN the reign of that pious Kingly monk, or monkish King, Henry VI, many chantries * were founded all over the kingdom by knightly and noble personages, for the superstitious purpose of having prayers daily offered up for the health of the souls of the founders while living, and after death. Among these chantries was one founded by Sir Thomas de Erdington, Kt. in Bilston Chapel, and called St. Leonard's Chantry. In the Rotuli patents for the 35th year of Henry VI, we learn that

"At an inquisition, held at Bilston, before John, Lord Lovell, Lord of the Manor of Stow Heath, and Richard Levison, Esq., of Wolverhampton, it was found that neither the king nor any person would sustain any damage if Sir Thomas de Erdington, Kt., gave to a certain Chaplain a dwelling-house, 12 acres of arable land situate in Bilston and other places in the county of Stafford," and their sanction was accordingly given. On this subject we will quote from Shaw's History of Staffordshire, the following account:

"In the 36th of Heny VI. (1458) this Chantry was founded,

* Chantries were ecclesiastical foundations which did not always involve architectural erections. The foundation meant the maintenance of certain services offered up in a certain place for the soul of the founder. In parish churches they were generally founded at existing altars, sometimes at the high-altar, and there might be several at the same altar.



ST. LEONARD'S CHURCH, BILSTON, 1883.

when John Mollesby, Gent., Clement Foxall, William Pipe, John Attee Lee, William Hopkins, Richard Adkins, Hugh Howchins, Richard Thomkys, William Robbins, William Kempson, Thomas Jackson, John Pipe, William Wilkes, Joan, wife of John Duddley, and William Perry, did surrender all their lands, lying in a field, called "Windmill" field in Bilston, near the way lying from the said Bilston to Wolverhampton, and three crofts, called the Prisons, Pagebirch and Moxalbirch to the use of Sir Thomas de Erdington, Kt., according to the custom of the Manor, which lands (by the license of Lord Lovell) the said Sir Thomas gave to Thomas Clark, perpetual curate of the Chantry of St. Leonard's, in Bilston, called Erdington's Chantry, together with several other lands, &c., viz: 1 messuage and 5 shops in Wolverhampton, 40 acres of land and 6 acres of meadow in a pasture called "Le Prieste Fields," in Bilston; 25 acres of land in a certain pasture called Stowbrook; 10 acres of land in Codsall, 3 acres in Bradley; 5s. rent in Handsworth, and 10 acres of land in the Rumbelows in Wolverhampton, all in the county of Stafford, to be held by the said Thomas Clarke and his successors, in perpetual alms. This grant was made on the feast of the Annunciation of St. Mary the Virgin, the first year of Edward IV."

The following is a copy of the original Charter still preserved in the muniment room of the Wrottesley Family:—

"Noverint universi per presentes me Thomam Erdyngtone militem fundatorem Cantarie perpetue Sancti Leonardi in Capella sancti Leonardi de Bilstone in Comitatu Staffordie vöcate Erdyngtones Chaunteri ordinasse, constituisse et in loco meo posuisse delectum michi in Christo Thomam Holdone meum verum et legitimum attornatum ad deliberandum pro me et nomine meo Thome Hecock perpetuo capellano Cantarie predicte plenam et pacificam seisinam ac possessionem de et in uno mesuagio et quinque shopis invicem situatis in Hampton, quadraginta acris terra et sex acris prati in Bilstone predicta, viginti quatuor acris terra et decem acris in Hampton predicta, ac eciam de et in decem acris in Coddesale et tribus acris terra in Bradley, ac eciam de et in quinque solidatis redditus in Honesworthe in Comitatu Staffordie, ac quinque solidatis redditus in

Duddestone, et tribus solidatus reditus in Watermerstone in Comitatu Warwici, secundum vim formam et effectum cujusdam càrte mee prefato capellano inde confecte. Ratum et gratum habiturus quicquid predictus attornatus meus de et in premisis pro me et nomine meo fecerit per presentes. In cujus rei testimonium huic presenti Scripto meo sigillum meum ad arma apposui. Datum ultimo die Augusti anno regni regis Henricus sexti post conquestum tricesimo sexto."

That is to say Thomas Erdington, Kt., lets everybody whom it may concern know that he founds a perpetual chantry, dedicated to St. Leonard, in the Chapel of St. Leonard in Bilston, to be called Erdington's Chantry, and gives power to his attorney Thomas Holdone to appoint and name Thomas Hecock to be perpetual Chantry Priest with full and peaceable possession of one messuage and 5 shops in Wolverhampton, 40 acres of land and 6 acres of meadow in Bilston, 25 acres of land and 10 acres of meadow in Wolverhampton, 10 acres of land in Codsall, 3 acres of land in Bradley, with 5 shillings rent in Handsworth, 5 shillings rent in Duddeston and 3 shillings rent in Watermerstone in Warwickshire, to be held by the aforesaid Chaplain and his successors. In token of which he hereby confirms and grants by these presents what has been done by his Attorney in his name. In testimony of which he signs the present writings with his seal and arms. Dated the last day of August in the year and reign of Henry VI. 36.

It is worth noting that Shaw gives the wrong name to the Chantry priest, who according to this Charter was one Thomas Hecock. The founder Sir Thomas Erdington was a descendent of Egideus de Erdington, who was Dean of Wolverhampton in 1258. Sir Thomas was the last of an illustrious race of Knights. He was Lord of Bordesley as well as Erdington, and founded a Chantry in Aston Church. He married Joyce Burnell, of Weoleigh Castle, and was buried in Aston Church, near Birmingham, where an altar tomb to himself and wife still exists. He died about the year 1468. He was joint lord of the Manor of Stowheath when the Chantry of St. Leonard was founded. It is certain that this foundation did

not mean the erection of a chapel,* but was merely ecclesiastical in character, and was probably founded largely for the purpose of providing an endowment for the priest of the chapel, who, until then, relied on the alms and gifts of the inhabitants, supplemented no doubt by grants from the Church of Wolverhampton, but of which we have no subsequent account, except what was indirectly implied by the Dean and Chapter of Wolverhampton, when the celebrated trial between the mother church and the free chapels took place in the middle of the eighteenth century, an account of which will appear in its proper place. The very deed which founded the Chantry above-mentioned became thus the basis of the right, afterwards triumphantly asserted, of the inhabitants to elect their own minister. The men of Bilston appear to have loyally supported Henry VI in his struggle for the crown, for we find that Thomas Hecock the chantry priest sought and obtained the assistance of Clemens Duddeley, Dean of Wolverhampton, for the following purpose. It appears that the free Chapel of Bilston enjoyed several privileges which had been obtained from Henry VI, but which had been annulled by Edward his successor, Thomas Hecock therefore petitioned the King to re-grant the Church its former benefits, and in conjunction with the Dean, obtained the following charter:—"Edwardus IV. dei gratia &c., to all bishops, abbots, priors, &c., greeting. It has been represented to us by Thomas Hecock, perpetual priest of the Chapel of St. Leonard, Bilston, and by onr beloved father, Clemens Dudeley, *Decanus de Wolvernhampton,* that the late King did grant unto the said Chapel of St. Leonard's certain priveleges, which we have declared null and void. Now, therefore, know that we out of our good pleasure do grant and restore the immunities formerly enjoyed. As witness thereof we have set our seal to this Charter the 5th day of February, and the 15th year of our reign, (1475).

We have no account of these immunities, but their forfeiture

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* Shaw labours under the impression that this grant of Sir Thomas de Erdington means the erection of a chapel in the town, and that previously no such a structure existed. In a subsequent chapter, however, we shall show that the lower portion of the existing tower is of early fourteenth century work being the only portion of the early fabric now remaining.

was due to the support the men of Bilston had rendered to the House of Lancaster, for in an old document which Mr. Ames, the Curate of Bilston in 1684, had seen, "Edward the King threatened certain persons of Billestune, in the county of Stafford, for aiding and abetting "seditious traytours and rebels."

One Captain Hugh Howchins, a native of Bilston, who had fought at Towton against the Yorkists, was pursued to Bilston by some White Rose adherents, but failing to find him, they set fire to his house, and levied a contribution on the inhabitants.

Thomas Hecock died about the year 1480, and Richard Beauchamp, then Dean of Wolverhampton, approved of a brother of Clement Duddeley to the Chapel and Chantry of St. Leonard, as appears by a document preserved in the Windsor Registry. This Robert Duddeley was a man of some learning, and wrote a volume of sermons, so full of thought and piety that he was appointed to the Prebend of Monmore. He died in the year 1494, at an early age, having obtained from Henry VII. a confirmation of the Charter of Edward IV. granted to the Church, in consideration of the loyalty shown to the House of Lancaster.

To him succeeded Richard Wrottesley, a younger son of Sir Richard of Wrottesley. During his curacy the Chapel was entered by a gang of outlaws, who stole nearly everything of value, and ruthlessly damaged the Coats of Arms and the altar.

On this occasion Richard Wrottesley communicated with the Dean, (John Morgan) and a meeting was called, when a resolution was adopted "praying the King for permission to erect a gibbet, for the punishment of outlaws." The King therefore granted to John Morgan, Richard Wrottesley, William Levison, and William Mollesley, power to erect a gibbet; which was accordingly erected shortly after. But this instrument does not appear to have disheartened the outlaws, who infested the district, for we read in an old document, that "ye robbers did unite in grete numbers, and burnede downe a gybette nere Bilstune, and alsoe at Wolverhampton," in the year 1509. These gibbets were, however, erected again, and in the old registers of Wolverhampton Church, the following curious entry is seen.

"1555. Charities to a gibbett beyond Bilstone." *

The next curate of whom we have any account was Edward Baker, who lived during part of the reign of Henry VIII.

In the Ecclesiastical valuation, instituted 1526, the following return was made for the Chantry of St. Leonard's :—

"Edward Baker, Chantrie prieste of the Chapel of St. Leonard's, in Billestune, Wolverhampton, and other places in the Deanery, hath land and tenements to the annual value of £5, and prays to be allowed for the rents of the assize 2 pence, and so remains clear £4 19s. 10d. The tenth of which is 10 shillings.

This Edward Baker continued priest until 1537, when the act was passed for the dissolution of all religious houses whose income was under £200 per annum.

On the visitation of the King's Commissioners to Bilston, to enquire into the state of the Chantry, the priest was dismissed, but he afterwards obtained a prebend in Wolverhampton Church.

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* The gibbet as an appendage of Manorial Courts was more common than would at first sight appear to an ordinary reader; yet even Shaw and Oliver were embarrassed with the above entry. The only difficulty to be solved however, is a topographical one, arising out of the literal wording of the entry. Was the term "beyond" Bilston carelessly used by the scribe for "near" Bilston. I take it that it was, and that it therefore related to the gibbet erected on the Bilston side of Stow Heath Lane, to the erection of which is due the fact that the Lane leading from the end of Stow Heath Lane to Millfields was anciently called Gibbet Lane, and is still frequently called so to this day by old inhabitants. This gibbet existed even into the last century as the following passages from St. Leonard's Churchwardens' Accounts, prove.

1698. For setting up ye gibbet - 2 6
1701. For repairing ye gibbet - 1 10

In the old Surveys of Bilston there is described a piece of land called "No Man's Land" situate near Stow Heath Lane, and local tradition has it that this piece of land was set apart for the burial of malefactors executed upon the gallows near by, and the tradition is in this case undoubtedly true. The "charities" alluded to in the extract from W'hampton registers, show how the gibbets were kept in repair.

He died, according to the Church register, April 11th, 1540.

The following return was made by the Commissioners:—

"Examined into the state of the Chantrie of St. Leonard's, called Erdington's Chantrie, Bilston. Its income is very small, and the priest, guilty of unlawful practices; we have, therefore, commanded that it be dissolved." On this subject St. Leonard's Register informs us that:—

"The Chantrie being dissolved it appears that one Hugh Lee* was possessed of the same land and chapel; dying seised thereof the 28th of Elizabeth (1586) and Hugh Wrottesley was his cousin and heir."

Mr. Ames here alleges that the Chapel of St. Leonard's had passed into lay hands, but from a Record in the Augmentation Office, dated 4th of Edward VI. entitled: "Lands and possessions, lying in the county of Stafford, late the property of divers colleges, chantries, free chapels, &c," we find that Hugh Lee held the office of bailiff or collector of rents at that time for the King, so that his possession of Bilston Chapel was merely as Crown bailiff, and that the building itself was not demolished as some have supposed, but only the superstitious chantry service of praying for the soul of the founder, Sir Thomas de Erdington discontinued.

A presentment was made of the ornaments, &c. belonging to the Chapel which were disposed of by persons appointed by the King. The goods were inventoried in the 7th year of Edward VI, when together with "4 bells from the Steeple."† they were delivered

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* Concerning the family of Lee, Mr. Ames tells us "that they were proprietors of Ye Corner House, and I conceive that it was from them that ye Perys purchased it, abt ye beginning of ye reign of King Henry ye 8th, as also they did of sev'll p'cels of land ab't ye same time."

† On one of these old bells was the following inscription:—

"I am callede ye Curfewe belle,
I ryngen att VIII or more,
Too sende ye alle too bedde,
And waken ye up att IV."

It was bought by Sir Thomas de Erdington from the Monks of Wenlock Abbey, where there was formerly a 'bell foundry,' of which a local poet once sang:

into the hands of the King's Commissioners, viz:—Hereford, Lord Ferrars of Chartley; Thomas Giffard, Kt., and Edwarde Lyttleton, Esqre.

The inventory of the goods, as taken by the King's Commissioners, was as follows:—

Item.	I chalyse partely gilte, weying XVI ounces.
It.	I image of silver, I crosse of wood partely gilte.
	I „ „ stone, I piece of holye candle, I blue glasse for ye altar.
It.	I redd clothe for ye altar.
It.	I vestemente for ye prieste marked with a crosse.
It.	IV Candlesticks of Iron weying LIII ounces.
It.	XXX beads and ryngs, gilte.
It.	I prayere booke for ye prieste.
It.	I paire of shoes.
It.	I Candlestick for ye Altar.
It.	IV belles from ye steeple.

From the same inventory we take the following memoranda.

"M'd. That the Chalesse, and all other ornaments were taken from them by Richard Forsett, surveor, *primo die Augustii anno secondo Edwardi VI* as appeareth by aquyttance by him made."

"In that old, dim, cloistered abbey,
Where the priests "Ave Mary's" sang,
And the solemn aisles at even,
With the "Benedictus" rang.

There the monks, and abbot, gathered
Round a furnace, rude, and small;
And the red and sullen glimmer,
Threw quaint shadows on the wall.

In the lonely hour of midnight,
In that wierd, and ghostly place,
(While the light from the rude furnace,
Dimly lit each priestly face).

They were met in solemn conclave,
There to cast a brazen bell;
At whose sound, these priests believed,
Devils would fly back to hell."

* * * * * * * * * * * *

The bell was purchased for XV marks, and given to the Chantry of St. Leonard's, to be tolled "for ye soul of ye donor."

[This acquittance ran as follows:—

"Received of ye Chapell wardens of Billestune too ye King his use I chalyse, late belonging to the Chantrie of St. Leonard's, and also, all ye ornaments thereto presented to bee belonging to ye saide Chantrie; which ornaments I have solde to dyvers persons att Wolverhampton.

Per mee Richard Forsett."]

"M'd delivered by the Right Honorable Walter Viconte Hereforde, Lorde Ferers and of Chartley, Thomas Gyfforde, Knight, and Edwarde Lyttleton, Esquire, Commissioners for Churche goodes within the Counti of Stafford, to William Robins, Churche warden there, iiii small belles in the stepull, safeli to be kept untill the Kinges Majesties pleasure be therein furder knowen. In wittenes whereof as well we the sayd Commissioners as the sayd Churche wardens to thes presents interchaungeabli have putt our handes the xiiii of May, *anno regni Edwardi Sexti Septimo.*

Wyllyam Robyns.

Endorsed Bilstone."

Most of these goods were afterwards sold into lay hands, and, notwithstanding Queen Mary's commands, on coming to the throne, for their restoration, were never returned.

Before the Dissolution of the Chantry there was a considerable quantity of land belonging to the Chapel. "There was, for instance," says Mr. Ames, "Priestfields now in ye possession of Jon. Rawley, or his undertenants valued now (1700) att above £20 p. ann̄; and ye house and backside by ye Chappell (held by Sir Walter Wrottesley and his ancestors). Besides there was a piece of land belonging to this Chauntrey which lies below Monmer-Green tow'ds Stow Heath.* It lies on ye north side of a piece of land called Monmer Croft, which Croft Rich: Wall of ye Heath sold to Will: Robyns 30th of Henry 8vi, and so itt appeares by ye sale of ano'r Croft or pasture from Jon. Howlett of

* From an old deed of the time of Henry VIII we take this extract. "The Priests of St. Leonard's Chapel hold one acre of land, with the marl pits thereon, situate in Monmoor Green."

Wolverhampton to Ric: Wall of ye Heath, dated 32º Hen. 8vi, and by a lease from ye s'd Ric: Wall to Ric: Robyns dat. 14º Hen: 8vi. What is become of this piece of land I know not. These writings are among Mr. Robbins's."

These lands no doubt became alienated at the Dissolution. Soon after the accession of Queen Mary the Chapel was re-opened, and the Catholic Ritual restored. The priest appointed was Clement Perrye, of whom Mr. Ames says in the Church Register: "Of the Monastery of Hales Owen was Clemt. Perrye, ye son of William Perrye of Bilston, (i.e. of ye Corner House)* about ye yeare 1531. He was there an Acolyth, and upon his being ordained Priest, he came and (I conceive) lived att Bilston; for I finde yt his orders were exhibited att Wolverhampton at a Visitation held by ye Commissary of Will: Franklyn, Dean of Windsor, and also before Cardinal Pole, there in 1556."

In another note Mr. Ames says:—By some writings which I have seen under ye hand of Clemt. Perrye, it appeares that he was Priest of Bilston, in ye time of Philipp and Mary. His lettrs. of Deacon's orders beare date Feby. 14, 1531."

By his zeal and local influence this priest quietly re-established the ancient form of worship. The old Curfew rang out its solemn peals; the vespers chimed on the sweet evening air, the low chanting of the mass filled the incense laden interior; pictures, banners, crosses and tapers gave pomp again to the service, and drew the superstitious population to the sacred building. The Church at this time was only a small one, capable perhaps of holding about 120 people, but it was large enough for the ordinary services of a village population only numbering about 300 persons—several of whom even at that early time were Ana-Baptists or Puritans. When special festivals were held the Churchwardens of the Mother Church of Wolverhampton set apart the south aisle for the people of Bilston. Clement Perrye or Pery

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* This house was a half-timbered residence situate at the south end of Wood Street, and it remained standing until about the year 1820, when Mr. Paul Atherton demolished it and erected the house in which he lived as a pawnbroker.

first began to enclose the Church from the public ways, which he did by planting around it a hedge and trees, a boundary which continued according to the following extracts from the Church wardens' Accounts until after the death of the Rev. Richard Ames in 1730.

		£	s.	d.
1689.	To Wm. Harvey for repairing ye hedge of ye Chapel yard - -	0	1	2
1693.	For mending ye Chapelyrd hedge -	0	1	0
1696.	,, making ,, ,, ,, -	0	1	8
1701.	,, mending ,, ,, ,, -	0	1	0
1711.	,, ,, ,, ,, ,, -	0	2	6
1723.	,, making ,, ,, ,, and for thorns - - -	0	3	9

Clement Perrye died about the year 1559, and he was succeeded by John Atte Lee, a relative of Hugh Lee, before mentioned as King's bailiff. He was a Protestant, and made great changes in the service, much to the annoyance of George Carew, the Popish Dean of Windsor and Wolverhampton, who being unwilling to offend Queen Elizabeth and to lose his Deanery, made a compromise with conscience and principle by altering as little of the ceremonial of the Church as possible. The dispute was long and bitter, but the Curate of Bilston partly from his regarding the Dean's interference as an invasion of his rights, and partly from the Protestant tendencies of the times carried his point, and established firmly the purified ritual. He died about the year 1594.

In an ancient document written during the reign of Elizabeth we have the following particulars of the tithe and rental charges of the township.

"Ye Inhabitants of Billstone do not paye anie Tithe haye in Kinde, but a certaine yearely sume of monie by composition as followeth."

A Rentall of ye Tithe Haye of Byllstone, according to a composition made by ye arbitramt of Henry Planckenoy, William Wollaston, Wylliam Latham and John Garwell, betweene Thoma: Leveson Esqyer for hym and hys heyrs for ever, Will: Sale, clerke

for hys lyfe and John Creswall, fermer of ye Prebend of Wobaston, for certaine yeares ensueinge. Sir Richard Pype, Knight, Edward Hussey, Esqyer, Robt. Mollesley, Gent, John Toncks, Edward Kempson, Willm. Foxall, Clement Robyns, Humphrey Perye, Willm. Marston, Roger Pyrrye, Edward Greene, Willm. Hamons, and Thomas Toncks for them and theyre heyrs for ever, and Maude Rudgeley* during her lyfe, which sayd rent for ye Tythe haye is to be payd at ye feast of Easter, or wt-inn Tenne dayes after yf it be reasonably asked, in manner and form foloying.

For ye ancient medowying as wel according to ye auncient custome as ye sd composition as followeth.		For groundes converted to mowyng not being auncient medowyng.	
Sir Richard Pype, Knight	xiiijd.	- - - -	xiiid.
Edward Hussey, Esqyre	vid.	- - - -	vid.
Robt. Mollesley, Gent.	xviijd.	- - - -	xviiid.
John Tonks -	iiis. iiiid.	- - - -	iiis. iiiid.
Edwd. Kempson - -	iid.	- - - -	iid.
Willm. Foxall - -	xiiid.	- - - -	xiiid.
Clemt. Robyns - -	xiid.	- - - -	xiid.
Humfrye Pyrry - -	xiid.	- - - -	xiid.
Nicolas Wylkes - -	xiid.	- - - -	xiid.
Edwd. Pyrry - -	xd.	- - - -	xd.
Willm. Marston - -	xd.	- - - -	xd.
Roger Pyrry - -	viiid.	- - - -	viiid.
Edward Greene - -	iid.	- - - -	iid.
Willm. Hamons - -	iid.	- - - -	iid.
Thom: Toncks - -	iid.	- - - -	iid.
Summa -	xvs. iiiid.	Summa -	xvs. iiiid.

Summa Totalis - xxxs. viiid.

* The Rugeleys were anciently seated at Shenstone, near Lichfield, and at Hawksyard; Geoffrey de Rugeley granting lands to Robert de Wolseley early in the reign of Henry III. The Maude Rugeley referred to was granddaughter of Humphrey, by Maude, a daughter of Richard Grosvenor. The Rugeleys bore for Arms—Argent, A Chevron between three roses, gules, seeded, or; quartering two horses' heads erased, sable.

CHAPTER V.

Arms in Bilston Chapel. Curious Law Suit. St. Leonard's Hill. The Boy of Bilston. The Market Cross.

ACCORDING to Shaw, there were in 1597 the following Coats of Arms in Bilston Chapel, several belonging to the Bilston Family and their connections having been destroyed by the robbers in the previous century.

1. A Lion rampant within a border, engrailed Sable. (Harpurquery)
2. Barry of six—or—and gules; a plain border, azure.
3. Or. A Chevron, Gules. (Stafford).
4. Azure—A Chevron engrailed between 3 lions' heads, erased—or—("Johannis Duddeley Armig.")
5. Argent—A bend and Amulet in Chief, Azure.
6. Sable—A Chevron between 3 Millpecks Argent (Moseley)
7. 2 Lions passant impaling a Lion rampant crowned. "Orate pro animabus dom." (Hugonis de Erdington).
8. Moseley as before, impaling. Argent, on a fess.
9. Sable. 3 escallops—or—(Byshbury).
   Broken.....Impaling quarterly. 1—A bend between 3 cross crosslets fithee and two fleur de lis. (Pype).
   2 A cross moline and canton.
   3 A bend cotized.
   4 Byshbury as before "Orate pro bono statu."
   "Will Mousley, fil et heridis Johis Mousley et Isabella uxoris."

After the death of John Atte Lee, John Robbins, who had been educated at Windsor, and was prebendary of Monmore, became curate. He was descended from a very ancient Bilston family, and through the influence of his relations, was able to do much in improving the Church and town. Though the Church

registers do not go back far enough to throw any light upon the history of the Church at this time, yet, most of the papers belonging to the "Robbins'" family, from which Mr. Ames obtained much information, were written by him. He held the office for nearly 34 years, during which time much of the spirit of Popery, in the ceremonials of the Church, had vanished, and more of the simplicity of the Protestant faith had been introduced. He was buried in "our Lady's Chancel" at Wolverhampton, March 20th, 1629.

During his Curacy, a dispute occurred between the inhabitants of Bilston and Wolverhampton respecting the apportionment of levies raised for furnishing soldiers for their division of the County. The following are extracts from the case and the award. "Decimo Septimo die Julii Ano Regni Dnæ Ma Elizab: Reginæ nunc &c. quadragessimo secundo, 1600. Whereas variance and question hath been moved between ye Inhabitants of Wolverhampton, and ye Inhabitants of Bilston, respecting ye apportioning and assessing of such leownes, impositions and payments for ye furnishing of souldiers, as for other her Maties. Service,—the said inhabitants of Wolverhampton alleging that Bilston ought to pay a *third* part chargeable upon the division (which the two towns constituted), and the said Inhabitants of Bilston on their part alleging, that they ought to contribute but a *fourth* part of the same. For the deciding of the same a petition was presented to Sir William Periam, Knight, Lord Chief Baron of her Maties. Exchequer and Justice of Assize within ye County of Stafford, who thereupon referred the said petition to her Majesties Justices of Peace and Commissioners for Musters, within ye said County of Stafford."

These Commissioners called before them witnesses from both towns, and after due deliberation, did order "yt in all leownes, impositions and paymts for her Maties. said service from henceforth to be made upon ye said Division of Wolverhampton and Bilston, the inhabitants should pay as follows, viz:—"that when, and as often as anie leowne, imposition or paymt. of Four poundes is imposed upon ye said Division of Wolverhampton and Bilston, ye Inhabitants of Wolverhampton shall of ye same Four pounds make

paymt, and discharge ye said Township and Inhabitants of Bilston of ye sum of Fifty-six shillings and eight pence, and yt ye Inhabitants of Bilston, shall of ye residue of ye said £4, being 23 shillings and 4 pence make paymt, and discharge ye Inhabitants of Wolverhampton, and in ye same proportion in all other leownes, impositions, and payments, uppon ye said Division. In witness whereof to these p'sents we ye saide Justices of Peace and Commissioners for Musters, have inscribed our names, ye day and date abovesaid."

During the Curacy of the said John Atte Lee, a dispute arose concerning a piece of Land called St. Leonard's Hill, which had been given by one Thomas Perrye to St. Leonard's Church. The following is a copy of the decree:—

"By a decree, made at the Rolls by Mr. Justice Hutton and Sir John Haywood, June 20th, 1622, it appears that the town leasow was called St. Leonard's Hill, and was given by one Thomas Perrye about the 19th of Henry VIII. (1494), for the use of St. Leonard's Chapel, in Bilston, for ever, for the repairing and maintaining of the same, and of divine service therein." This land was given by Thomas Perry into the hands of William Moseley, Richard Kempson, William Tomkys, and Nicholas Robyns, as Trustees, which Nicholas Robyns, being the surviving Trustee, his heires claimed it as their owne, paying sometimes 5 shillings and afterwards 10 shillings per annum for it, until Thomas Smith and Roger Perry, Chapelwardens, obtained a decree as plaintiffs against Clement Robyns and William Robyns, (heirs of the said Nicholas) as defendants, plaintiffs carrying their case.

Respecting this piece of Land, Mr. Ames writes in the Register as follows:

"That I cannot finde out wch is ye right roadway to ye said piece of ground, no person being able to informe me; itt was heretofore for many yeares held by a Tennant liveing in Wolverhampton, and by yt way, I conceive ye way was lost, but John Wooley holding itt passes through his owne ground (called ye Hills) to itt. However, he alleges yt that ought not to be accounted ye road."

We come now to a remarkable case of pretended demoniacal possession by a youth, called by various writers the "Boy of Bilston." Two rare contemporary pamphlets supply the information which general historians only briefly supply. The first was called

A faithful relation of the proceedings of the Catholic gentlemen with the Boy of Bilson; showing how they found him, on what terms they meddled with him, how farre they proceeded with him and in what case, and for what cause they left to deale further with him. By Thomas Wheeler, 1620.

This was a pamphlet of eight pages, written by a local Catholic priest, to remove the suspicions which had been aroused, to the effect that the priests had tampered with the Boy of Bilston, and taught him to counterfeit the contortions of demoniacs for sinister proselytising purposes. This pamphlet is believed to be entirely lost, but a reprint of it appeared in 1622, with the following account:

The Boy of Bilson; or a true discovery of the late notorious impostures of certain Roman priests in their pretended exorcisme, or expulsion of the devill out of a young boy, named William Perry, sonne of Thomas Perry, of Bilson, in the County of Stafford, yeoman. Upon which occasion hereunto is permitted a briefe theological discourse, by way of caution, for the more easie discerning of such Roman spirits; and judging of their false pretences, both in this and the like practices. At London. Imprinted by F. K., for William Blount, 1622.

The author of this was a curate of Bilston, named Thomas Baddely, who, to give the whole case fairly, quotes Wheeler's pamphlet in full. This excessively rare book of which I know but of four copies (viz., one in the British Museum, another in the Salt Library, Stafford, a third in my own library, and a fourth in the possession of F. C. Perry, Esq., of Dunston, Penkridge), treats of one of the most remarkable cases of imposture, pretended witchcraft, and demoniacal possession, to be found in the whole range of English literature. It has been described as one of a series of cunning and designing attempts on the part of the Romish priesthood, made in the reign of James I, to startle Englishmen into a belief in the divine authority and apostolic character of the Catholic Church. They (the priests) spread all over the country (and particularly in Staffordshire, where many Catholic nobles and gentlemen resided) and sought to delude unwary individuals (chiefly women and children) into acting the part of demoniacs—for which

character they were carefully and secretly trained, in order to give the priests the opportunity and glory of showing their divine commission by "casting out the Devil," and working miracles beyond the reach of the Protestant clergy. A superstitious belief in the existence of witches and evil spirits at that time unfortunately prevailed to a great extent, and the priests were therefore not without suitable materials to work upon. In the case of "The Boy of Bilson" the scheme succeeded for a time to admiration; but was finally detected, first by the action of the dupe himself, who continued to act the part longer than his teachers had intended, for his own benefit, and secondly by the presence of the Bishop of Lichfield (Thos. Morton) in Court at Stafford, when a poor woman, named Joan Cox, was on her trial for having bewitched the boy. The Bishop doubting the lad's *bona fides* induced the judge to suspend sentence, until he had been carefully watched, for which purpose he was conveyed to Eccleshall, the Bishop's palace, where he was carefully watched and tested, and at length detected in this manner. One of the boy's tricks was to feign convulsions, when the first verse of the first chapter of St. John was read, so the Bishop called for a Greek Testament, and addressing the boy said, "It is either thou or the Devil: he (being 6000 years standing) understandeth the languages of the world, so that he cannot but know when I recite the same verse in Greek; but if it be thyself thou art a most execrable wretch, who play'st the Devil's part." He then read the 12th verse, which the boy supposing was the first, fell straightway into one of his agonies; which being over, the first verse was next read, yet he supposing it not to be the same text, was not troubled. He was tried at the assizes, 1621, and confessed his duplicity, but having craved pardon, was discharged, and afterwards bound apprentice by the Bishop, and proved a very honest man. The imposture created great excitement, and before the discovery the poor old woman, accused by the boy, was tried for a witch, and narrowly escaped conviction.

Another exceedingly rare book, a copy of which is also in the writer's possession, deals with the same interesting imposture. It is entitled, "The Second Part of the Boy of Bilson: or, a True and particular Relation of the imposter Susanna Fowles, wife of John Fowles, of Hammersmith, in the county of Middlesex, who

pretended herself possessed with the devil. Giving an exact account of the Beginning, Progress, Conferences, Discovery, Commitment, Confession, &c., of the said imposter." London, 1698. The book, which is a small quarto, has 24 pages, of which ten are devoted to the "Boy of Bilson," the account containing several additional particulars.

Market Crosses were erected in all towns and villages which possessed the right by charter, or prescription, of holding a weekly market. They were usually adorned with a Cross, hence their name, as a sign that people frequenting the market must be just and upright in their dealings. At the Cross House, the Manorial Courts were held, and justice meted out to applicants, and here all parochial business of importance was transacted. On the steps leading to the upper room, the Priest preached the gospel in Rogation Week, and taught the perambulators of the parish boundaries the necessity for respecting their neighbours' boundaries and landmarks. Here mendicants, authorized by royal authority to beg, stationed themselves to crave alms from merchant and buyer; here royal proclamations were made; here public misdemeanants were whipped, here were kept the parish stocks and pillory, and round it centred the dull public life of the town just as the religious life centred in the parish Church. Touching the Bilston Cross House the Rev. Richard Ames informs us in a note in the Church Register "that in Bilston there was reckoned two Crosses—ye Nether Cross, where John Roberts and his wife now (1700) live, and ye Overas Cross, late hard by William Smith's. And I do conceive yt ye piece of ground now called Overas Croft, was anciently called Over-Cross-Croft."

This latter Cross appears to have been taken down in the year 1698, for in the Churchwardens' accounts for that year, we have the following entry:—

		£	s.	d.
1698.	For taking down ye Old Cross and bringing ye materials up - - - -	3	2	0

This means, as I take it, that the materials of Overas Cross were taken to repair the Nether Cross House, on account probably of both having gone greatly to decay. This supposition is

supported by the following item in the Churchwardens' accounts for 1702.

	£	s.	d.
"For repairs to ye Cross House - - - -	4	18	2

Other references to this building occur in the Churchwardens' accounts as under:—

		£	s.	d.
1701.	For mending Stokes's shoes, keeper of the Cross - - - - -	0	0	4
1703.	For a lock for ye Cross - - - - -	0	0	6
1706.	For glazing ye Cross House - - - -	0	1	0
1724.	For ale at a town's meeting held at ye Cross	0	2	6

At a Vestry meeting (held July 3, 1733) of ye Inhabitants of Bilston, it was unanimously agreed that a public crib, or place for ye security of prisoners should be erected at ye public expense upon ye foundations of ye towne house, commonly called "ye Cross."

This does not mean that the Cross House had disappeared, but that being built upon arches or pillars, as many of these Cross Houses were, the Inhabitants then decided to utilize the foundations by building up the openings, and thus making a lower room for prisoners. That this is a correct interpretation is proved by the following entry in the Register:—

"1738. Ye Cross House was leased to S. Stones for £30."

This could not be if the building had been destroyed five years before, and a crib built upon its foundations. The Overas Cross was undoubtedly the original structure erected in the reign of Edward III, when that monarch granted the privilege of a market to the town. On the leasing of the Nether Cross House as just recorded, the building was no longer alluded to in the town documents, and having fallen out of parochial into private hands, no record of its destruction has been kept.

CHAPTER VI.

The Legal Status of the Township.
The Lord of the Manor's Chief Rent.
The Fifteen Customary Tenants, and their Residences.

BILSTON was until recently legally designated a Constablewick or Chapelry within the parish of Wolverhampton, on the ground that Bilston was but a Chapel of Ease, and subject to the Dean and Chapter of the Collegiate Church. Under the ancient law a perpetual Curate (other than a perpetual Vicar) was either the acting ecclesiastical deputy of the laymen, who had succeeded to the property and duties of the religious corporation dissolved by Henry VIII; or the assistant of a beneficed clerk licensed to a particular Chapel within his parish. The Bishop's licence was required in either case and may have been revocable, seeing that the perpetual curacy was not considered a benefice (Weldon V. Green, 1772). The Act of George I, Sect. 2, c. 10, altered this state of things in most cases, by providing that all such Churches, Curacies, or Chapels which shall be augmented by the Governors of Queen Anne's Bounty shall be from thenceforth perpetual cures or benefices, and the ministers duly nominated and licensed thereunto, shall be in law bodies politic and corporate and have perpetual succession, and be capable to take in perpetuity. The Act 2 and 3 Victoria c. 49, Sec. 2 confirms these provisions. The present legal force of a perpetual Curate's license in an augmented Curacy would therefore be to confer a freehold benefice upon a perpetual Curate, duly nominated.

Notwithstanding the clearness of the above mentioned provisions, Lord Campbell ruled in the Queen v. the Chapel wardens of Bilston (Nov. 20, 1850) concerning the repayment of Church rates for the enlargement of the Church, that Bilston was not a distinct parish. In delivering judgment, he said the matter turned chiefly on construction of 58th of George III, c. 45, sec. 59, and according to that Bilston was not a parish within the section, but part of the parish of Wolverhampton, for it had no cemetery prior to 1727, and no marriages had been celebrated there from 1754 to 1841. This argument however, was not a valid one, for not only did the Curates of Bilston bury the dead in its own burial ground, and previous to 1754 from 1727 perform the marriage service, but the town levied its own rates, maintained its own poor in a separate poor house, appointed its own overseers and constables, and performed of its own initiation all the duties and requirements of a separate parish. But even apart from this, the act of George I, clearly constitutes Bilston a parish, by turning the perpetual curacy into a benefice, it having been augmented by Queen Anne's bounty; hence since the passing of the Bilston Improvement Act in 1850, the township has been usually designated a parish.

The township is situate partly in the Manor of Stowheath, partly in the Manor of Bradley, and partly in ancient demesne, and now freehold.

The proportions are as follows:—

	ACRES.
In Stowheath Manor - - - - -	1041
,, Bradley ,, - - - - -	557
Freehold - - - - - - -	982
Total	2580

The Copyhold is held at the will of the Lord of the Manor, each tenant paying a fine at every alienation, and a quit rent annually, in lieu of service. The heir succeeds the ancestor by payment of the customary fees, on the entry of the name in the Manor Roll. Up to the end of the sixteenth century, there were but fifteen tenants who paid chief rent to the Lord of the Manor, they collecting the rents from their under-tenants. This chief rent

anciently amounted to Five Pounds, Four Shillings, and five pence half-penny, as appears by an Ancient Rental the copy of which here follows:—

Imprimis.

	John Foxall - - - - - -	0	4	5
Item.	Ye sd John Foxall for New Bridge	0	0	7
,,	Edward Kempson - - - - -	0	14	3
,,	John Marston and William Marston	0	5	0
,,	John Tomkys's Cottage, of late a dunghill	0	0	0½
,,	William Robins, - - - - -	0	12	4½
,,	Edward Greene - - - - - -	0	0	0½
,,	Thomas Parkes - - - - - -	0	0	3
,,	Nycolas Wilkys - - - - - -	0	5	2
,,	Robert Mollesley - - - - -	0	7	11
,,	John Green, for Vodell's Ground -	0	0	11
,,	Roger Perry - - - - - -	0	2	9½
,,	William Perry, ye younger - -	0	0	1½
,,	Edward Perry - - - - - -	0	4	2
,,	Richard Tomkys, for Askey's Tenement	0	4	1
,,	Richard Perry - - - - - -	0	1	5
,,	John Perry - - - - - -	0	5	3
,,	Thomas Tomkys - - - - -	0	17	6
,,	John Pipe - - - - - - -	0	4	2
,,	do. ,, for pasture ground adjacent to Stow Heath -	0	3	4
,,	James Langstone - - - - -	0	0	9½
,,	William Mason - - - - -	0	1	6½
,,	John Clemson, for Perry's leasow -	0	0	8
,,	William Whitmore, for Kem-hay -	0	6	0
,,	William Fletcher, for Voddo's Hurst or Doddo's Hurst	0	0	8
	Total summe comes to	5	4	5½

This deed dates about the end of the reign of Elizabeth. A hundred years after these chief tenants had more than trebled themselves, as the following list given by Mr. Ames proves—though no sums are given to indicate their relative importance.

1699. The half-yeare's Chiefe rent booke due at Ladyday, 1699, and ye like at Michaelmas, 1699, to ye Lord of ye Manor of Stow Heath.

Widow Pearson.
Francis Greaves.
Thomas Rixam
John Jesson for houses bought of Price
,, ,, for houses where his Mill stands.
Executors of John Perry, gunsmith
Thomas Raban, for land bought of Perry.
Thomas Homer, for land bought of Perry.
William Green, gent,
,, ,, for Edgerley's house
Thos. Smith for Jos. Hincks.
Joseph Stokes for land bought of Jos. Hincks.
Joseph Perry.
William Weetman.
Executors of William Backhouse
John Perry, for Hide's House.
John Greene.
Withington of Tettenhall, for Widow Holme's land.
Edward Proud.
Cape's Houses.
Robert Rawley.
Elizabeth Homer, (widow)
Widow Harper.
Edward Sharp.
Richard Sharp.
Richard Mousell.
John Riley for part of Tew's land.
Thomas Smith, of Wolverhampton.
Thomas Linton.
Edward Taylor.
Executors of Saml. Kempson.
Thomas Robins, Gent.
Roger Stoaks.
The heir of John Ward.
Isaac Smith.
Edward Kempson, Gent.
William Smith.
John Hawkesford.
John Bearsley, for land bought of Tomkys.
John Perry de Gate.
John Perry de Corner.
Ric: Lees.
John Perry, of ye Croft.
Saml. Pipe, Esq.
Henry Smith, for a house bought of Mr. Pipe.
Elizabeth Cooper.
John Wooley for Mr. Moseley's land, and for the White House.
Henry Homer.
John Hoo, Esq.
Joseph Perry.
George Perry, for a house bought of Mr. Robins.
Richard Pye Shale.
Patience Proud
Captain Lane, for land.
John Hawkins.
Mr. Leveson, for Heath's Lane
John Parkes.
Daniel Whitehouse.

Joseph Whitehouse.
Roger Dovey, and for a barn.
William Edgerley.
Henry Cowell.
Thos. Robbison.
William Field.
Richard Bate.
John Jesson.
Joseph Clarke.
Thos. Ettingsall, for land.

At this time (1699) the occupiers of the fifteen customary tenements were as follows:—

1.—Alexander Perry, son of John Perry, deceased, late of the Gate, holdeth a Tenement or Messuage, being customary called Green Croft.

2.—Joseph Stokes, son of Roger Stokes, holdeth a Messuage or Tenement, heretofore the estate of Richard Perry.

3.—Samuel Pipe, Esq., holdeth a customary Messuage or Tenement, called Hume's tenement.

4.—Humphrey Perry, Esq., holdeth a Messuage or customary Tenement, called the Croft House tenement, being customary.

5.—John Perry, gunsmith, holds a customary tenement, the house he now lives in.

6.—William Robins, Gent., holdeth a customary Messuage or Tenement, being the chief house in Bilston, where his ancestors did dwell.

7.—Edward Perry, of the Corner, holdeth a customary Messuage or Tenement, wherein he now dwells.

8.—Joseph Perry, holdeth a customary Tenement, bought of Mr. Moseley.

9.—William Kempson, holdeth a customary Messuage or Tenement, the house he now dwells in.

10.—Isaac Tomkys, Gent., holdeth a customary Messuage or Tenement, in which his ancestors did dwell, now in possession of Richard Hawkesford.

11.—William Ward, holdeth a customary Messuage or Tenement called the Over House Tenement, late the estate of Edward Kempson, called Ward's tenement.

12.—Thomas Smith, holdeth a customary Messuage or Tenement, purchased of Isaac Tomkys, Gent., called the Old House.

13.—Joseph Linton, holdeth a customary Tenement, where he now dwells.

14.—Joseph Linton, one other Tenement, called the Stone Pit Croft.

15.—John Hoo, Esq., Serjeant at Law, holdeth a customary Messuage or Tenement, called Attwood's Tenement, now in possession of Sarah Smith.

Most of these Tenements can now be localized.

1.—The residence of Perry de Gate was a half-timbered mansion standing at the north end of Wood Street, near the site of Naylor's Fishmonger's shop, that house and its neighbours on either side, being contemporary dwellings.

2.—Unknown.

3.—A half timbered house situate in Hall Fold, near the Angel Inn, from whence the place derived its name. The present Pipe Hall was built in the last century, by the last of the Pipe family resident here.

4.—The Croft House was situate on Mount Pleasant in the midst of a beautiful garden-croft and orchard. The grounds came up to the corner of Lichfield Street. Several small houses on the site of the present vicarage, were left by Humphrey Perry, towards erecting a Curate's House, for the Curate of Bilston.

5.—John Perry's residence stood on the site of the present Wesleyan Chapel, and here a descendant, called Joseph or Jokey Perry lived when the land and hall were purchased by the trustees, the building first being merely altered, but subsequently pulled down.

6.—The Mansion of the Robyns family was a fine and noble Tudor structure, with carved gables and front, and arabesque ceilings. It stood until the beginning of the present century, and occupied the site of St. Luke's Vicarage.

7.—The Residence of the Perrys of the Corner, was a large half timbered dwelling, built in a court at the south end of Wood Street, on the site of the present buildings built by Paul Atherton, pawnbroker. It was purchased by the Perrys from the Symonds' family in the reign of Edward VI.

8.—Unknown.

9.—The residence of the Kempsons' is the house now occupied by Mr. Delany, Ironmonger, near the Market Gates, in Church Street.

10.—The Tomkys town residence (for the family had a fine hall at Neachells in Stow Heath) was at the Corner of Lichfield Street and Church Street, a stone building, once partly occupied by the Post office, the site of it now occupied by the Town Hall buildings.

11.—The William Ward here mentioned was the Hon'ble William Ward, of Willingsworth, near Wednesbury, brother of Baron Ward. The site of his Tenement is unknown.

12.—This was situate at the top of Oxford Street.

13.—The residence of the Lintons was a fine stone building, which stood in the midst of its own grounds in Oatmeal Square, remnants of this mansion still remaining in the stone fences, round the back premises of the Bull's Head, High Street.

14.—The other residence of the Lintons was the former mansion of the Greenes, now standing, and used as a licensed house, called "The Greyhound," or "Greyhound and Punchbowl." This structure is undoubtedly the oldest at present standing in the town, and was anciently the Manor House of Stow Heath, and is said to have been built in the latter end of the Fifteenth century. It is a good specimen of the half timbered, many gabled structures peculiar to the earlier

Tudor period, with low ceilings, queerly shaped rooms, with recesses oddly placed, and floors of different levels. It formerly contained some magnificently panelled and carved oak wainscotting, and traces of a beautiful ceiling in moulding and arabesque are still to be seen. Naturally after a century of hard usage from miners and ironworkers—the habitues of its drinking rooms—the house is much the worse for wear, and is fast losing every semblance of its former substantial importance. It has, however, one ceiling in fair state of preservation of an unusual character, and that is in the liquor vault, where the votaries of Bacchus partake of the usual libations. This ceiling is moulded in a design of birds, vine leaves, and grapes, and was once painted in colours, but is now whitewashed and smoke grimed. The cement is still as hard as stone, and though the surface is broken into compartments by massive oak beams, it is a fine specimen of ceiling decoration of the Queen Anne period, of which one at Blickling Hall, Norfolk, is the most perfect remaining example.

15.—This house I cannot localise, for Mr. Hoo's residence was at Bradley Hall, where he died, being Lord of the Manor of Bradley.

The following is a list of the order of serving Bailiffs within the Constablewick of Bilston, in the Manor of Stowheath, which list was given by Mr. Francis Wood, one of ye Lord's Bailiffs of the said Manor, at a Court of Survey, 1716.

1. Mr. Will: Kempson.
2. Joseph Stoaks.
3. Saml. Pipe, Esq.
4. Humphrey Perry, Esq.
5. John Perry, Gunsmith.
6. Mr. Will: Robins.
7. Mr. Edwd. Perry.
8. Joseph Perry, late Mr. Moseley's.
9. Alexander Perry.
10. Isaac Tomkys, Gent.

11. William Ward.
12. Thomas Smith.
13. Joseph Linton.
14. Joseph Linton, per Thomas Smith.
15. John Hoo, Esq., Serjeant.

The names of the Bilston Jurymen at that Court of survey were :—

Mr. Edward Perry.
Mr. Will : Kempson.
Richd. Hawkesford.
Thos. Smith.
Jno. Shale.

When the Court Leet was finally done away with, and the appointment of Bailiffs ended we have no definite record, but it must have been at the early part of the present century, judging from the absence of all references to it from that time in the parish accounts.

CHAPTER VII.

Church History continued.
Bilston during the Civil Wars.
Dr. Plott's Visit to Bilston.

IN a previous chapter I left off the ecclesiastical history with the death of John Attee Lee, in 1629. He was succeeded by Hugh Adkins, a nephew of Nycolas Adkins, a native of Bilston. This curate was educated at Oxford where he took his M.A. degree. During his curacy parochial affairs were quiet, and the tumults, divisions, and excitements arising out of the struggles of King and Parliament had not yet reached the town to set it by the ears. He died in 1640, and was buried in Wolverhampton Church. To him succeeded a clergyman named James Osborne. During his curacy he strenuously exerted himself to obtain the consecration of his Chapel and yard for burial purposes. But the times were unpropitious. The country was in a state of warlike ferment for one thing, and for another he had to contend with the uncompromising opposition of the Dean and prebendaries of Wolverhampton, because (1) at this time all burials, christenings, &c., were performed in the Mother Church, the Dean and Chapter receiving the fees; (2) The Chapel was more immediately under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Dean: and on these grounds they opposed the application. Thus, from selfish motives, the inconvenient customs of christening and burying at the Mother Church were continued, to the great dissatisfaction of the inhabitants. This must have been very disappointing to the curate, who appears to have been a very able and faithful minister, as is proved by his being untroubled

by the two parties in the State. He died in November, 1659. Shaw, says, in his History of Staffordshire :—A grandson of this parson purchased some property at Wolverhampton from Earl Gower, in October, 1739, for £5000. This person whose name was Charles Osborne, left a legacy to this town, as is seen by the annexed extract from the Church register :—Oct. 24, 1748. "At a Vestry meeting held at the Bull's Head, &c., it was unanimously agreed that the Rev. Edward Best, together with Edward Kempson and William Smith, Chapelwardens, of Bilston, shall give a power to Mr. Samuel Redhead, Merchant, of Antigua, to receive a legacy left to the liberty of Bilston, by Charles Osborne, of St. Christopher's, deceased, and we do agree that this affair shall be transacted by Richard Molineux, Merchant of London.

As witness our hands,

Alex. Perry, and others."

What was this legacy? Was it ever obtained, and if obtained, was it ever distributed? These are questions which we fear will never be answered. Like many other legacies left to this town, it has undoubtedly been neglected, and we cannot help remarking that great blame must rest upon some one for this sad state of things respecting the Charities of the town.

During his Curacy Bilston was more than once visited by Royalist and Parliamentarian soldiers, but I find no trace of any damage being done to life or property. On one occasion however it narrowly escaped being the scene of a tragedy. The family of the Levisons held a little property in Bilston for several generations, and this passed to the Levison-Gowers on their union by marriage. The levy books of the Township had yearly, a hundred and fifty years ago, entries in which Lord Gower was assessed for land. This fact seems to have come to the knowledge of the Parliamentarian soldiers, for when Sir William Brereton visited Wolverhampton he despatched Captain Foxall to the estate of the Gowers, at Bilston, with instructions to levy contributions upon it through the estate agent. In a rare tract headed "Lord Gower, a traytor" we have this entry touching this visit. "Wee departede from Wolverhamptune earlie in ye morning and went to Bylston,

where ye traytor Lord Gower hath some possessions. Wee tooke many valuable goodes and also idolatrous ornaments from the steward Will: Tomkys, whom we captured, and from whom wee endeavourede to gett some information, but tho' wee tormentede hym, wee could learn nothing, and it well nigh cost hym his life, seeing that Captn. Foxall could harde forbeare running hym thro' with ye sworde."

The Lord Gower seems to have lost most of his possessions in this town about this time, for in subsequent entries in the assessment books he is only rated for land to the amount of 8d.

In the Parliamentary army returns dated April 27th, 1644, we have this entry:—"The weekly pay of Bilston, Bradley, &c., shall be assigned to Captain Philip Young, for himself, his officers and men."

This amounted for the whole township to £3 15 10 weekly.

The townspeople seem to have avoided extreme partisanship on either side, for though each party in the state had its adherents, they kept truce at home. Much of this was owing to the wisdom and goodness of the curate for the time being, who instead of stirring up strife preached and practised peace and forbearance. During his ministry the chapel underwent considerable repairs, the fabric having gone badly to decay through age. Unfortunately, the registers of the period are lost and we have therefore little information to guide us respecting the life of the little village, then having a population of some 500 souls, and one which was continually increasing, in itself a testimony to the freedom from the strife of parties at that time.

The inhabitants paid their weekly contribution to Captn. Young, and beyond that they appear to have remained unmolested. Judging from the entries in the churchwardens' accounts from the year 1668—the oldest now preserved downwards—, we should say that the inhabitants of Bilston shared in the general joy at the Restoration. Here are a few extracts as proofs in support of this supposition.

1668. To the Ringers for ringing on May 29th - 0 2 0
1669. For ringing on May 29th - - - - 0 2 6

and so on pretty regularly until 1706 when we get an additionally interesting entry as follows :—

1706. May 29. To ye ringers as usual 2/6, and for a bonefire then, 6d., in all - - 0 3 0

while in 1708 we have this new item—

To Francis Beebee for ale drunk May 29 - - 0 2 6

When Hearth Money (a tax imposed by the merrie monarch soon after his restoration) was first collected in 1661, there were a total of 101 hearths in Bilston which were chargeable according to the act, and these conjointly paid £10 2 2½.

The next curate of St. Leonard's was John Day, who held the living till 1684. Of him nothing is now known, for strange to say, in spite of his successor's Pepy's-like fondness for making notes, Mr. Ames does not once allude to him, though he nearly filled two large volumes with his entries. The registers, which would have thrown some light upon the subject, have disappeared, and the "old Town book," which Mr. Ames occasionally quotes from in the early years of his curacy, has also disappeared.

About the time of Mr. Ames entry upon his ministry here Bilston was visited by that lover of the marvellous, Dr. Plott, who gives us the following notes on matters which he considered worthy of his attention.

"I met with a sort of sand at Bilston so very fine that it is hardly palpable. It is of a deep orange colour, and it is sent for by the artists living at a great distance, and used by them to cast metal with."

Speaking of eels as night walkers, he says :—"They were actually caught in the very act, near Bilston, creeping over the meadows like so many snakes, from one ditch to another, by Mr. Moseley, who told me they not only did it for bettering their condition, but, as he apprehended, for catching of snails in April and May, the best time in the year for them. P. 243.

Again :—"The quarry at Bilston is also very remarkable, it lying in beds in "*Plano Horizontis*," one under another, twelve beds deep; every bed being thicker than that above it by an inch or more, so that the lowest bed is about a yard thick, of which they make troughs, and cisterns, &c., some of the tables of stone rising so large and even that Mr. Hoo, of Bradley, got one here eight yards long, naturally so very even that in the whole length it did not bevel or depart from a true level more than an inch. Some of the stone dug at this town is also curiously striped black, whereof there are elegant patterns in the gardens of Sir Henry Gough, at Perry Hall. The grinding stones dug at Bilston are so fine, and of so small a grit, that they are only useful for thin edged tools, such as knives, razors, &c., and are better than the grinding stones brought out of Derbyshire."

Once more :—"The smithys and kitchen fires are much better supplied by the common coal of this locality, which some prefer to the "Cannel" itself: the texture and other qualities thereof being such, viz :—That it is a flat, shining, coal, having pretty open grain, lying seldom in a level with a plane of the horizon, but most times inclining somewhat to it (according to which it cleaves into blocks at the discretion of the workman) that burns away with a clear bright flame, and into white ashes, leaving no cinder as that from Newcastle-on-Tyne. Of this sort there is so great a plenty in South Staffordshire, that most commonly there are twelve or fourteen Collieries at work, and twice as many out of work within ten miles around; some of which afford 2000 tons of coal yearly, others 3000 and even 5000 tons. The upper beds above the ironstone lie sometimes ten, eleven, and twelve yards thick, nay! I was told by Mr. Pursehouse that, in his grounds at Ettingshall, at a place called Moorfields, the bed of coal is fourteen yards thick, inasmuch that some acres of the ground have sold for £100 per acre! I was informed of one which sold for £150, and well indeed it might be so, for out of a single shaft there has sometimes been drawn £500 worth of coal."

CHAPTER VIII.

The Rev. Richard Ames.

The Church Registers. Curious Extracts therefrom.

E have now arrived at a period which may be described as a new era in the history of the town. The appointment of the Rev. Richard Ames to the Curacy, was one of the greatest importance from a historical point of view. He no sooner arrived, than he commenced the useful task of chronicling everything that happened in the Township worthy of note, and everything that had happened before his time, of which he could find any previous record. He was the son of the Rev. William Ames, of The Wyke, in Shiffnal parish, Shropshire, by his wife Mrs. Joanna Ames, daughter of Mr. John Bache, of Chesterton in Worfield parish. Richard was born on January 4th, 1662, so that when he came to Bilston he was only 22 years of age. He had one brother, John, who went to reside at Newcastle-under-Lyme, and married Jane, daughter of Thomas Doody, of Hanchurch, gent. Two of the sons of this brother subsequently came to Bilston, one, William, set up in business as a Buckle-maker, then the staple trade of the town, and the other, Richard, after graduating at Oxford, came to assist his uncle, and finally succeeded him in the Curacy. The following note relates to other nephews. "18 April, 1729. Memd. Ye 26th March last past my nephews, John and Joseph Ames began to work in ye shopp of my house att Priestfields, and ye night before Tuesday, April 15th Joseph and Benjamin Stephens, and my maid-servant, Mary Beavon began to lodge there. *Benedicat Deus hunc capto.*"

Mr. Ames remained unmarried, and, subsequently, his mother on becoming a widow came to reside with him. She died on the 25th of February, 170$\frac{7}{8}$ at Bilston, after a fortnight's illness; and was interred on the 27th in the aisle leading from the south to the north door of Wolverhampton Collegiate Church. Mr. Thomas Allestree Official of Wolverhampton preached her funeral sermon, upon John 11 c. and 24 v. During Mr. Ames' long ministration here, extending over a period of 46 years, he did much to benefit the chapel and town. The Chapel was rebuilt; the burial ground consecrated; the endowment largely augmented from Queen Anne's bounty, the Vicarage built; the town ways were paved, and other valuable improvements effected. He was the guide and guardian of his parishioners, and everything which tended to promote their welfare received his sanction and assistance. To him we owe a great obligation for his research into the history of the town; information we have thus obtained which would otherwise have perished in the ordinary course of time, never to have been recovered. Nor was his ministerial conduct alone beneficial to the town, but his benevolence was unbounded. He gave £100 towards the expense of obtaining "Queen Anne's Bounty," for augmenting the living; and it was his skill and perseverance which enabled him to succeed in that object. He gave £50 towards the expenses arising from the maintenance of the Poor House. He gave a folio bible and prayer book for the use of divine service; and, in his last will, left his library of books for the use of the Curates of Bilston for ever. These are but a few of the many instances in which his benevolence is seen. He was, indeed, a father to his people; and having endeared himself by many ties to his flock, closed his useful and christian life May 21, 1730, lamented by all classes of his parishioners. He was buried in the Church on May 23, and a tablet was erected to his memory, bearing this inscription—

I. M.

"Richardus Ames nuper Curati de Bilston juxta depositi nati 4 die Januarii, Anno dom. MDCLXII. denati May 21 æt fuæ LXVIII. Frat autem dictus Richardus filius natu minor, Reverendus Willi Ames, antehac vicarij de Wenlock Magna, in agro Salopiensis, ex uxore ejus Johanna una es filibus Johannes Bache yeom de Chesterton en parochia de Worfield, in dict com Salop.

Tu vera Amice Lector
Tamquam Migraturus Habita."

Which may be Englished thus:—"In Memory of Richard Ames, late Curate of Bilston, buried near this place. He was born 4th day of January, 1662; died May 21st (1730) aged 68. He was called Richard the younger, son of the Rev. William Ames, formerly Vicar of Much Wenlock, in the County of Salop, by his wife Joanna one of the daughters of John Bache, yeoman, of Chesterton, in the parish of Worfield, in the said County of Salop. Do thou, O friendly Reader, so live as though thou hourly expectest to depart."

Mr. Ames commences his Register with the heading:—

"I CAME TO BILSTON 1684,"

and from that time till his death he indefatigably entered every item of information that came under his notice, whether it related to the Township or to the district around. As a consequence his two volumes are among the most curious and valuable of all the Church Registers that have come under our notice, and certainly deserve to be published.

In this chapter we have brought together a number of entries of a miscellaneous character, relating to the town and locality, which will have an interest alike to the inhabitants of the town, and to antiquaries generally.

1689. Nov. ye 12th. Forasmuch as some persons by sculking wtin this Constablewick, have surreptitiously gain'd a settlement here, p'tending that they have lived here long enough before ye Act abt settlemts did comence in ye reign of King James ye II, therefore to frustrate such p'tentions in ye future Richard Cooper and Daniel Whitehouse, Chappell wardens, and Overseers of ye Poore, made a searche about all ye incomers, ye daye and date above said, and they are these yt follow. The names of 22 persons are then given.

"1696. On which same day (Sept. 10) abt 4 of ye clock in ye afternoon, there happened a sad and lamentable fire in Barn

Street in Wolverhampton, by which ye general part of Barn Street and allmost all Boblake was laid in ashes, the winde being att that time very high. Twas said to be occasioned by some harvest stuffe in ye Barn of — Stych, wch tooke fire, itt being ill gotten in."

1703. June ye 16th. Mr. John Tomkys, Vicar of Snitterfield, in ye County of Warwick, departed this life on Friday, ye 18th. He was interred neare his first wife in ye Chancell of Snitterfield Church. He was ye 3rd son of John Tomkys, of Bilston, gent. and Sarah his wife, who was the daughter of Mr. Dolman, of Seisdon, in this County. Ye said John Tomkys by his last will and testament dated June ye 14th, 1703, left his study of books, to ye use of ye Curates of Bilston for ever. He also left by ye same will (aftr ye life of his wife) all his lands in Wombourn, Pen, Orton, and Lyde in Staffordshire, and ten poundes per annum or two hundred poundes in money out of his farme in Blencon, (Warwickshire) for ye use of ye Curates officiating att Bilston for ever. I was a bearer att ye funeral."

[This will was disputed by Isaac Tomkys, William Tomkys, and John Hayes, nephews and executors of the testator. The case was heard before Sir Edward Northy, Knight, Her Majesty's Attorney General, at the relation of Richard Ames in the year 1704, and the terms of the will were finally upheld].

"June 20, 1715, being Monday, between ye hours of three and four in ye afternoon, very great quantities of hail and rain—accompanied by lightning and thunder—fell in ye Constablewick of Bilston. Ye hailstones were of unusual size and bigness (sic); it was said that some of them were seven inches about. As to my own (Mr. Ames) particular, I measured several, some of which were two or three inches about, and one was five inches in compass. Ye hailstones were of the consistence of ice, and in this place it was not doubted that to corn and other tillage it did great damage to the value of £900, and such prodigious quantities of water were in the streets that ye oldest man never saw the like."

"March 20, 1718. About a quarter of an hour before 8 o'clock, ye night before, a very strange meteor was seen by many

people. It burst, and like fire fell down from it, which for a short time, occasioned a light almost as great as at noonday."

"The Lane leading from Ric: Allons to Jon. Becketts is now usually called Hobrin-Lane, but anciently (and I conceive truly was called) Hobrudding or Hobrydding Lane, as appeares by a Coppy of the Court Roll dated 2nd and 3rd Phil: et Mariæ."*

"There is a certain house in this towne wt a garden and pitt given by Indenture to Hen: James, of Oaken, and Jon. Glover, of Bilbrook, Churchwardens of Codshall Church (and to their successors for ever), to ye maintaining ye service of ye Bd V. Mary in yt Church, and also upon condicion yt ye soules of Will: Wilk: his wife, his father and mother, shall be there pray'd for, for ever. This deed is dated September ye 4th, in ye 13th yeare of ye Reign of King Henry ye 8th."

"1706. Augst 2. Dr. John Hough, Lord Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, did preach and confirm at Wolverhampton, being requested so to do by Mr. Henry Wood, in ye name of ye Dean and Prebendaries of ye Collegiate Church. Ye Bishop and Prebendaries were treated by ye Churchwardens of Wolverhampton. Ye Prebendaries present were Mr. John Plymley, Prebendary of Featherstone, Mr. Thos. Allestree, Prebendary of Hilton, myself (Mr. Ames) Prebendary of Monmore, and Mr. John Hilton, Prebendary of Hatherton."

"There was anciently in Wolverhampton a Chantry dedicated to ye blessed V. Mary, for I find yt Thomas Wrottesley (capellanus beatœ Maria in Wolverhampton de jure cantaria predicto) released a piece of land wth an house thereupon for term of life to John Waterfall, and Alice his wife. Ye rent reserved to him and his successors was 8d. of silver money. The date of this deed was 1403."

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* We have a number of places with similar names in this district, such as Hob's Hole, near Portobello, and Hobrydding Lane, at Wednesbury. The root of the word is said to be found in Hobgoblin, and may mean in these cases that the lanes were believed, in the middle ages, to be haunted by goblins, or demons.

"1714. A sudden fire broke out in the hatchelling house of Richard, ye son of Jane Taylor, of Bilston, Widdow, who was tennant to Thos. Smith, ye wind was high, and yet by God's goodness, it did no more damage than burn ye barn and building close adjoining to ye house. Only ye house was damaged and Ric: and Jane Taylor's goods were damaged by pulling them to pieces. Ye barn had in it much watered flax belonging to Thomas Smith, so that I conceive his loss would not be much short of £80, but I believe ye Widd: and her son did not lose ye value of £20. Ye fire began betwixt six and seven of ye clock, in ye evening. For ye Widd: and her son, I (with ye Chapellwardens) collected in Bilston. £3 4. 9½."

"Sept. 8, 1720. That on that day ye cole pitt (barley) field was turned in, as ye windmill (hard corn) field was two days before. It was a good harvest tho' neare a month later than last year. *Deo gratias.*"

"1720. Dec. 26. At abt 7 o'clock in ye night following, a sudden fire happen'd in ye packing-house of Richard Rowlaston, of Bilston, Carrier. It was occasioned by a candle (struck out of a lantern by an unruly horse) falling among tutor'd flax, or such combustible matter.* God be thank'd, it was a very calm night so yt ye fire only burnt his flax and hay, and ye roof and inside of his packing-house and stable."

"1722. 25 Septr. Thomas Backhouse, alias Chamberlayn, and Edwd. Fellows finished the cleansing of ye pitt, in ye Towne

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* Flax-dressing appears to have been carried on largely in Bilston at this time. The burial and baptismal entries show the names of many flax dressers and tow dressers. Thus in the year of the fire alone, there are the following baptismal entries.

1729/1.	Jany. 29.	William ye son of John Pool, Flax dresser.
	April 14.	Thomas „ „ „ Tho: Cresswell, Tow dresser.
	June 24.	Esther, daughter of Edwd. Phillips, Flax dresser.
	Augst 2.	Saml. son of Richard Pitt, Tow dresser.
	Sept. 10.	Elizabeth, daughter of Tho: Poole, Flax dresser.
	Nov. 22.	John, son of Jos: Mosse, Flax dresser.

The trade shortly after died out.

leasow, called ye "Little Greaves," att ye back side of James Hadley's house. It had not been cleansed in the memory of men. They were one and twenty days about it, reckoning single days works, so yt I compute it cost me one and twenty Shillings ye doing; besides four Shillings more, wch I payd Thomas Blakemore for four loades of lime, to mix with ye mudd."

"1723. 9th Decr. The Reverd. Mr. Wm. Craddock, Rector of Donnington, (Salop) was install'd Prebendry of Willenhall (he having resigned that of Hatherton). The mandate for his installmt was directed to me (ye senior Prebendary) by ye Rt. Hon'ble George Lord Willoughby de Broke: Deane of or Collegiate Church of Wolverhampton and of Windsor; I being constituted *locum tenens.*

"On the 10th Decr. 1723, by virtue of an'r mandate to me, directed by ye same Ld. Willoughby de Broke, ye same Mr. Wm. Craddock, was by me putt in possession of ye Sacrist's Stall, both which places became vacant by ye death of Mr. Hinton. He (Mr. Craddock) was also constituted principall official."

"1725. 20th July being Tuesday, I gave to Mr. John Pountney, one of ye Churchwardens of Wolverhampton, one Guiney (21/-) desiring that he and his partner, Mr. Turnpenny, would lay it out towards ye planting some such trees as they shou'd think fitt, in ye place of those yews wch had been planted on each side of ye walk, from ye Church Gates towds ye south door of Wolverhampton Church."

"1725. 28 Augst. They began to reap hard corn in ye Cole-pitt field, ye season being till then wet and cold. *Miserere nostri Deus.*"

"Oct. 9. Mem^d That this day ye Cole-pitt and Middle Fields were turn'd into (as comõn) ye harvest prov'd tedious by much wett weathr, but I hope in general there was not much loss or damage."

"1726. 20 Augst. The Upper or Windmill Field was turned into—ye hard corn being all carried in, and what else grew

in that field. Harvest was early and tho' tis said ye corn crop was thin, it was good in ye head, and tis hoped will be proveable. *Deo gratias.*"

"1727. Memd. That on the 29th May, the toll gate att Bilston Upper Field Gate was erected by Jos. Mansfield, p'suant to ye Birmingham Rode Act, in which I (among many others) was named a Commissioner. Vide, ye Act. Richard Bate was ye first keepr of ye toll gate."

"1727. 22nd Augst. Bilston Upper Field and Middle Field were made comōn. There had been a very dry season from abt St. Swythyn's, so that I hope things ripened very well, but corn was dear. My maid, Mrs. Sarah Gibbons, told me she payd six shillings for ye last strike of wheat she bought."

"1727. 3rd October. The general Quarter Sessions of ye Peace for ye County of Stafford, were holden att Wolverhampton, which I never remember to have been done before my time."

"1728. April 17. Being Markett day att Wolverhampton, Graine took a very great price. Markett people said oates were from 4/4 to 4/8 p. bushell, or strike, barley from 6/6 to 6/8. Maslin or mum-corn from 8/4 to 8/10 and wheat att 10/- p. bushell, or strike. Trading was dull, and an aguish distempr rife in this country. *Domine miserere nostri.*"

These extracts have been brought together for the purpose of showing how interested Mr. Ames must have been in passing events, and how diligently he recorded them; probably, as much for the benefit of posterity as for his own amusement.

CHAPTER IX.

The Church Registers continued.
Curious Baptismal Entries.

THE present chapter deals with baptismal entries of a curious or noteworthy kind. The first entry made by Mr. Ames is dated Decr. 14th, 1684.

Jane, ye daughter of Daniel Whitehouse and Margaret his wife - - - × × ×

It is worthy of note that Mr. Ames' baptismal entries are followed by three crosses, as above, until July 30th, 1697, when they cease altogether. Whether these crosses were inserted to correspond with the three signs of the cross made over the child during the baptismal ceremony (as was then the usual practice) or as indicating some leaning on Mr. Ames' part towards the Romish ritual, at a time when royalty was coquetting with Popery, is not of course ascertainable. The use of the crosses in the Registers certainly synchronises with that period of our history when the Protestant succession was in imminent peril. Yet the whole career of Mr. Ames is so opposed to ignoble time-serving, and shows such loyal devotion to the Church that we prefer to dismiss the second hypothesis as untenable.

At the top of the second and third pages of the first Register we have these notes respecting the payment of baptismal fees to the Mother Church of Wolverhampton.

"1684. It is to be noted that according to custom a p'son yt

has a child baptised at Bilston pays ten-pence to Wolverhampton. Ric. Ames."

"1686. That ye Curate of Bilston is not bound to gather the fees, but 'tis to be done merely of courtesy, and Wolverhampton does not hinder ye Curate's fee. Ric. Ames."

We have also the following memoranda:—

"1688. Between ye last two (baptismal entries) John Jesson had a son baptized by some Non-conformist (Mr. Eccleshall I suppose) but wch day I know not. The reason was because I would not baptize it (tho' in health) wth out godfathers and a godmother. Tho' ye sd John Jesson's other children were baptised according to ye way of ye Church of England. *Annon fuit solus sed non ex notitia?*"

"1700. Eliz: ye dautr of Hen: and Joan Tiler, of —— parish neare Stratford-on-Avon, in Warwickshire. Ye child was taken ill and privately baptized. She lay in att her sister Robbison's. How ye (King's) duty will be answered 'tis hard to say there being no distress to be had."

"1703. July 31. Penelope ye daughtr of Mr. Edwd. and Mrs. Mary Perry. She was born abt 5 of the clock yt morning. My goddaughter. Pd 10d. to Wolverhampton."

"1704. Augst 5. Henry ye son of Hen: and Martha Smith (born between 2 and 3 yt morning)."

"1705. Eleanor, ye daughter of John and Mary Marston, of Blakenall, in Wolverhampton p'ish. She was borne att Ettingsall, and being weake was baptized by me yt day att Ettingsall."

"1706. Decr 4. Henry ye son of John and Anne Jevon, (borne 2 nights before abt 12 o'clock)."

"1708. Augst 27. John ye son of a travelling woman wo said her name was Anne Smith, yt her husband was impress't for a souldier att Hanchurch neare Newcastle in May last, and went under Captn. Middleton of Newcastle. She saies also yt she was borne att Stramshull neare Uttoxeter, and yt her husband was also

borne in yt parish and yt they were married att Chedle. Her virgin name Anne Mills or Anne Ward."

"1710. June 4. John ye son of William and Jane Darby. His father was impress't by ye Inhabitants of Codsall."

"1711. July 2. Richard ye son of Will: and Eliz: Turton, borne a little before 2 of ye clock yt morning."

"1715. July 7. William ye son of Will: and Eliz: Turton. He was borne ye 3rd day of ye month (being Sunday) abt 6 of ye clock in ye morning—Recd. 10d."

"1718. Octr 11. Elizabeth ye daughter of William Ames, bucklemaker, (my nephew). She was born ye 9th inst., being Thursday, abt 2 a clock afternoon. Rec. 10d. for W-Hampton."

"1720. April 18. John ye son of John Westwood, bucklemaker. Note. That now there are living and in good health four John Westwoods of this family in Bilston in a lineal descent: that is ye father, grandfather, and great-grandfather of this infant, and the wives of these persons are likewise living and in good health."

"May 15. (same year). Joseph ye son of Jos Monsall, Cordwainer. *Script in novo Hospitio.*"*

"May 17. (same year). Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ye three sons of Thomas Beavan, bucklemaker. All born this day."

"1721. Sept 18. Rebecka ye daughter of Joshuah Housknott, of Willenhall, Surgeon-barber. It seems he was an Anabaptist and outrun his family abt a month agoe, and ye child being somewhat ill ye mothr and fr'ds brought it to Bilston. It was abt 3 years old."

"1722. July 8. William Marston, aged abt 18 years. He was apprentice to Mr. Cooper, of Bilston, bucklemaker. He was born att Wednesbury of Anabaptist parents."

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* This means that the above entry was written in the New Vicarage which had just then been completed. Reference to this will be made in a subsequent Chapter.

"1723. April 20. Sarah, ye daughter of John Pinson, bucklemaker, by his wife Sarah, who died yt morning, after she was delivered of anr dead child, by Mr. Lowe."

"1723. June 3. Richard ye son of Richd Baker, Junr., of Sedgley p'ish, flaxman. Note. This child's great grandfather (Michael Baker) is living and pretty hearty."

"1723. Dec 30. Richard ye son of Richard Taylor, flax dresser; Baptiz'd by my nephew Mr. Richard Ames, Vicr of Stretton upon Dunmore, Warwick, being then att Bilston."

"1725. Dec 30. John ye son of George Robinson, bucklemaker, borne ye night before."

"1725. Mch 14. Walter ye son of Waltr Frazer, a poor travelling person. He saies he was twenty five yeares in ye service of ye Govermt as a comon souldier, that he was born at Banff, a county town in Scotland, that his wife Anne ye dautr of Tho: Sansom bridle bitt maker, of Walsall, in this County. She was brought to bed in this Town."

"1725. May 7. Sarah, ye daughtr of Samll Bromfield, of Darlaston, and wife of Tho: Holland of this Towne, bucklemaker. Her parents were Anabaptists. She was aged abt 25 years."

"Martha, her sister, servant to Margt Rowley of this towne, widd: Baptd then about 22 years old."

"1726. July 23. John ye son of Benjamin Cox, locksmith, of Neachills, ye child was brought to Bilston Chapell. Note. That John Cox, ye grandfather of this child was (as I take it) borne att a little house neare Finney-Well, which has now for several yeares been quite demolish'd. He was one of ye child's godfathers."

"1726. Sept 8. John, Mary, Elizabeth, and Hannah Shaw, widd: whose husband was killed some time since by Mr. Compson's Fire-Engine which he managed or looked after. He was an Anabaptist and wou'd not suffer his children to be baptiz'd. He came from Hedgeford. This family (after his death) was certificated for by Shareshill. See certificate."

From these entries it will be seen that the Registers are of an interesting character, and further, that in most cases in which the children's parents were of any social standing, some importance was evidently attached to the exact time of birth. It was an age of gross superstition, and possibly this scrupulous attention to the natal hour may have arisen from a desire on the part of parents to know through the agency of the astrologers, or "wise men," as these pretenders were emphatically termed by our great grandfathers, the fate of their offspring. Up till a very recent date "wise men" were consulted by Bilston people not only for the purpose of having the secrets of the future unravelled, but for the purpose of discovering "stolen property," obtaining wondrous charms, and other weird and uncanny matters, known to the ignorant and superstitious.

CHAPTER X.

The Church Registers continued.
Some Curious Burial Entries.

THE entries relating to the deaths of members of the fifteen principal families of the Town, and of the neighbouring Clergy are very numerous, and they throw such a light upon the personal history of the population that the following extracts will no doubt be acceptable to the reader. The entries are not without their value to the antiquary and the genealogist; and serve in numberless cases to supply the place of epitaphs, which, owing to the frequent rebuildings of the Church, are not very numerous.

"1707. Memorandum.—Yt Mr. John Perry of Cannock, ye only son of Mr. Humphrey Perry, of Stafford—wch Mr. John P—— was my landlord for ye house I now live in—was burried ye same day, and much abt ye same houre att Cannock as my mor was burried att Wolverhampton, viz: abt 5 of ye clock in ye afternoon. He was abt —— years of age. He dyed of ye small pox; he married Mrs. Dorothy, ye sister of Mr. Edward Wilson, of Cannock, by whom he had no issue."

"1709. August 10. On wch day was burried att Wolverhampton, William Smith, father of Thomas and Henry Smith, of this Town. He died aged about —— years, after a long illness."

"1710. March 25. On which day Alice Rowley, widd: of

of this Town was burried att Wolverhampton. She was very old. Ye widd : of Robt Rowley, late of this Town. She in her life time gave six pounds, willing that ye yearly income thereof shou'd be given to ye Curat of Bilston, provided he celebrated divine service yearely on Midsummer day, and preached a sermon or procured it to be done. That money I (Mr. Ames) have given bond for."

"1712. Memorandum. That abt 11 or 12 of ye clock in ye night between ye 1st and 2nd of August, 1712, John Hawkesford of Bilston, locksmith, departed this life of a suppression of urine, aged about 71. He left by his last will and testament, Dated Feby 24, 1709, five poundes to his son Richd Hawkesford, willing yt ye yearely product thereof shou'd on every 25th or 26th of Decemr be given to ten poore widows or persons in Bilston. He married Elizabeth ye daughter of John Smith, of Bilston."

"171$\frac{2}{3}$. 24th March. Yt about 12 of ye clock the night between ye 25th and 26th day of January last past, Elizabeth Hawkesford of Bilston, ye widdw of John Hawkesford above mentioned departed this life after a long indisposition. She gave to her son Richard Hawkesford seven poundes and ten shillings, willing yt he and his heires &c., should give yearely for ever sixpence a piece to 10 poore widdows or persons in Bilston, upon ye 25th day of January, itt being as I take itt her wedding day. She was aged about —— "

"171$\frac{2}{3}$. Yt on the 19th Febry Mrs. Matilda Addenbrooke, relict of ye Reverend Mr. Saml Addenbrooke, late minr of West Bromwich, and mother of John Addenbrooke, (a com'enced doctor of Physick) of Catherine Hall, in Cambridge, of which he had bin Fellow, was burried in ye Collegiate Church of Wolverhampton. I preached her Funeral Sermon. She dyed suddenly (of an apoplexy as was thought). She was daughter of John Perry, Gent, of Bilston, and of Mrs. Jane, his wife. She was ye last surviving sister of Humph : Perry, Esq., of Stafford."

"1716. Memorand. Ye 11th Novr. Humphrey Perrye, of Stafford, Esqre, departed this life at Heywood. He was one of his Māties. Justices of ye Peace for this County. He was my very good friend and patron. He was the only son of Mr. John Perry

of Bilston, by his wife Mrs. Jane Palmer. He left no issue living. I understand he gave by his late Will and Testamt. Twenty six poundes ℔ annum. issueing out of his Copyhold Estate att Bilston, for charitable purposes, and £100 in money to be laid out in building an house for ye Curat of Bilston. He was buried 14th Novr, being Wednesday, in ye south corner of ye Chancell of Stafford great church, neare his wife Mrs. Catherine Abnett."

[Of his charities further will be said in the chapter on Doles].

"$17\frac{19}{20}$. Feby 23 (Tuesday) my friend Mr. Tho: Congreve, M.B. was splendidly burried in ye great chancell of Wolverhampton Church. He had for neare 30 years practised Physick att Wolverhampton, and had his education att Cambridge. He was of ye Congreves att Chatwell, neare Newport, in Shropshire. His grandmother and mine were sisters. The Rev. John Hinton preached ye funeral sermon."

[This physician wrote a pamphlet entitled:—"A Scheme for making a Canal between the Trent and the Severn," with map 8vo, London, E. Curll, 1717. This pamphlet is usually bound up with Erdeswick's Survey of Staffordshire, issued by the same printer].

"$17\frac{19}{20}$. Feby 29. (Bisextile or Leape year) ye Rev. Mr. John Carter, Curt of Willenhall, was buried in ye sd great chancell of Wolverhampton Church. He had officiated there for somewhat more than 40 yeares, was son of Mr. Carter, a mercer of Brewood, was agd about 70. He was of very peaceable deportmt and orthodox principles. I was one of his bearers. He never married."

"$17\frac{19}{20}$. March 1st. Was buried in ye South chancell of Wolverhampton Church, John Hoo, Esqre, Sergt att Law, of Bradeley in this Chapellrie, aged about 62. He dyed att Serjeant's Inne, in London, of ye stone, as I take itt. He was ye eldest son of Mr. John Hoo, of Bradeley. He married ye daughter of —Hanbury Esqre, neare Bewdley. He had no issue, and was in his lifetime a benefactor to ye charity boys of Bilston, towards which charity he gave four poundes ℔ annum.* He was splendidly buried. His heire is John Hoo Esqre of Barre."

* This Charity is lost, as is also that of Mrs. Hawkesford first mentioned.

"1720. April 18. On which day ye Rev. Mr. John Hillman, M.A., principall Official of Wolverhampton and Prebendary of Hatherton, and likewise under schoolmaster, (of Grammar School) was interred in ye Chapter-house of ye Church. He was my contemporary att Baliol College, Oxford. Aged as I take it abt 58. *Faxit Deus ut ipse memor sini mortis futuræ.* He left only one son who is also M.A. His widᵠ is Mrs. Phœbe, eldest daughter of ye Rev. Mr. Tho: Allestree, (my old friend) who had for many years been official and preaching ministr att Wolverhampton, and removed to Hamstall-Ridware, where he dyed about 4 yeares agoe."

"1720. About ye middle of ye night between ye 24th and 25th of this month (October) dyed my hond Friend Wm. Ward, of Willingsworth, Esqre. He was ye only surviving son of ye Hon: Wm. Ward, Esqre, wᵒ was Bro: to ye Rt Honᵇˡᵉ Edward Lord Dudley, Baron of Birmingham. This Mr. Ward was one of ye Knights of ye shire for ye County of Stafford. He gave ten thousand bricks towᵈˢ building ye house for ye curate of Bilston, his two sons John and — (illegible) having been undʳ my tuition till they went to Eaton-school. He dyed of a nervous fevʳ, and was privately buried att Wednesbury in ye vault belonging to their family in ye night, between ye 3rd and 4th of Novr."

"1723. Mem: Yt on Thursday ye 22nd of this instᵗ Decr. Will: Colburne, of Duck Lane, Collier, was buried att Wolverhampton. He was said to be aged 96 yeares."

"1722. Octr 15. Thomas Smith senr of this Town, yeom: was buried att Wolverhampton. He dyed by a gentle decay in ye 64th yeare of his age. By his will he left ye interest of six poundes towards procuring Queen Anne's bounty money. I preached his funeral sermon at Wolverhampton."

"1725. Augst 23. On which day Mr. Humph: Pipe, *Art. Magr,* under school mastr of Wolverhampton Free School (my intimate Friend) was buried in ye south chancel of Wolverhampton Collegiate Church. He dyed (as I take itt) of an Iliack passion, ye 21st inst, after 3 or 4 days' illness. He had been a com'oner of Pembroke College, Oxon, where he tooke his degrees of B.A.

and M.A. He was ye youngest son of Samll Pipe, of Bilston, Esqre, and married Mrs. Grace Botts, a gentlewoman of good family and fortune, by whom he left one son, Samll. He was a person of good learning, piety, charity, and goodness of disposition. He was in deacon's orders. Aged abt 43 or 44."

"1726. 1st Nov. This evening was interr'd att Tettenhall ye Rt Wor'p'full Sir John Wrottesley, Bart. He was a very worthy gent, of great affability, integrity and temperance, and above all of singular piety. I had rec'd severall marks of his esteem, and in particular (without being asked) he gave two guinneys towards ye building of this house (vicarage) wherein I now dwell. He died as 'tis said of an ulcer in his kidney. He was Patron of Codsall."

These extracts by no means exhaust the *in memoriam* contents of these interesting parochial records. Neither are they confined to the three great eras of human life. They contain many notes relating to the manners and customs of our forefathers, as we have yet to show.

CHAPTER XI.

The History of the Church continued. Consecration of the Churchyard. Some Burial Customs. Death of the Rev. Richard Ames, 1730.

INFORMATION is often obtainable from Church wardens' accounts respecting the state of the structure of the Church, when other sources are silent. Thus the earliest reference to the fabric occurs in the Acc'ts of Willm. Kempson and Edwd. Baggley, Chapel wardens for the year 1691, the items of expenditure being as follow:—

	£	s.	d.
Jon Westwood and his son for work and for timber	0	3	6
The Masons for work 12/- for haire 6d., for drink to ym 2/-	0	14	6
For mending ye pulpit 4d., for stone for ye sill 1/6	0	1	10
To Willm. Robbins for tyles 4/3 to Jon. Green 1/6	0	5	9
For carrying ye flagging stones 9d., and building stones 1/-	0	1	9
For bringing of it downe 9d., carriage of ye tiles 6d.	0	1	3
For ye latch and catch of ye Church gate	0	0	6
Jon. Smith for ye gate post 2/6, for mending a bell 6d.	0	3	0
For mending ye clock	0	3	6

In the following yeare we have another series of charges for repairs, as under:—

"The charges abt ye Chapell mending."

	£	s.	d.
For 4 load of lime 3/4, 1 load of quarry stone 2/-	0	5	4
For bricks 700, 7/6, and bricks of my owne—3 quarters of an hundred—10d. for sand 10d., in all - - - - -	0	9	10
Ric: Knowles for removing ye bricks into ye Chapell	0	0	4
Jos. Reyley ye first time for worke 1/10, ye second time for 3 daies himself, his son, and a man, 7/- in all - - - -	0	8	10
For haire 4d., and for drink in all - - -	0	1	0
Ye carpenter 1 daies work 1/2 - - - -	0	1	2

In the year 1699, some further repairs were done to the fabric, as the accounts for that year show.

To Jon. Westwood for work and timber done at ye Church - - - -	0	1	3
For a bell rope 1/6, for gutters 2/6, for carriage and loading 2/3 - - - -	0	6	3
To Tho: Turner for work 8/5. To Geo: Upton for ditto 3/10 - - - -	0	12	3
To Mat: Poole for work 5/5, for sand 1/3 - -	0	6	8
For drink to ye workmen at 1d. p. daye each -	0	1	3
More to Tho: Turner for work 4/10, to Geo: Upton 2/8 - - - - - -	0	7	6
To Mat: Parker 3/1, to Edwd. Lees for crests 1/2	0	4	3
For drink for ye workmen, 4 daies att 1d. each -	0	1	0
For nailes 8/8, for lathes 10/8, for glasing 5/- -	1	4	4
For mending ye weather cock 6d., sand and carriage 1/- - - - - -	0	1	6
To Jon. Westwood more for work and timber -	0	2	11
To Fra: Greaves for setting up a seat - -	0	0	4
For 8 loades of lime 6/8, for haire 3d., - -	0	6	11
For a barre of iron for a window - - -	0	0	4

In the year 1704, some further repairs had become necessary, indicating clearly enough that the Church through age had got into a very dilapidated condition. This is not surprising, when we consider that the building was then nearly 300 years old.

The items for these repairs are as follow:—

	£	s.	d.
To Fra: Greaves for 1200 laths - - -	0	14	0
,, Jon. Westwood for work and timber - -	0	4	9
,, Jon. Woolley for one load of tiles and crests -	1	0	9
,, Tho: Smith for anor load with crests - -	1	0	9
For nailes used att ye Chapell - - - - -	0	9	5
For 25 poundes of iron and workmanship - -	0	5	8
Pd. ye masons for work done att ye Chapell -	0	11	0
To Tho: Smith for two loades of sand - -	0	0	6
For bricks for ye Chappell - - - - - -	0	2	0
To Tho: Turner and his men for work done there	0	14	6
For gutteres for ye Chappell 2/4½, 1 lb. of Glue 6d.	0	2	10½
To ye masons £1–1–0, for two strikes of leather 4/-	1	5	0
For two barrels of lamb-black - - - - -	0	0	8
For oyl 7d., 2 strike of haire 1/- toto - - - -	0	1	7
For 2 gate posts and setting up - - - -	0	2	4
,, 2 latches, catches, and hookes and hinges -	0	1	6
For nailes 2d., 2 roddes for ye frame 4d. - -	0	0	6
For 23 loades of lime to Jos: Webb - - -	0	19	2
For coales and cleansing ye Chapell - - -	0	0	6
For glasing ye Chappell windows - - -	0	4	5
For 4 daies worke of Greene ye mason at ye Chappell	0	3	4
To ye masons in drink - - - - - -	0	4	6
For carrying 3 load of timber from Wolverhampton to Chappl -	0	9	0
,, 2 loades of sand 2/8, for bricks and tiles 14/6	0	17	2
Trimmings for glasing 9d., for iron barrs and worke 1/6 - - - - - -	0	2	3
For sprigs and other nailes 6d., to Jos: Webb for 12 loades of lime 10/- - -	0	10	6
To the *Fletcher* for nailes - - - - -	1	0	0
Tho: Turner for 10 dayes and his man 9 dayes worke (masons) - - - - -	0	7	4
Geo: Upton for 9 daies 10/6, ale for ye workmen 5/6	0	16	0
For seven strike of haire 2/4, and Chr: Allen 5/-	0	7	4
Christr: Allen's Bill for stuffe and worke for the gallery.			
For 2 girders, 18 foote and halfe apiece - -	1	17	0
,, 60 yards of joyce £1–5–0, and 300 inch boards £2/8 - - - - -	3	13	0

	£	s.	d.
For 11 Rizers 4/-, for 32 foot of square stuff for rail string - - - - -	0	15	0
,, 10 Bannesters 5/10, for three balls and one pendall 2/- - - - - - -	0	7	10
,, 8 yards of square stuff for ye bellfree - -	0	4	6
,, a door for ditto - - - - - - -	0	6	6
,, 70 feet of boarding for ye stairs 11/8 and 50 foot of sparring for stairs 4/ - -	0	15	8
,, 12 yards of joyceing for ye belfree 4/3 and for 8 bannesters there 5/4 - -	0	9	7
,, 15 foot and an halfe of halfe-inch boards -	0	2	6
,, 3 yards of wainscott for ye belfree 12/-, and 6 yards of wainscott in front 1/-, 13/-	2	5	0
,, 36 feet of moulding for ye trimmer - -	0	6	0
,, 2 roof windows and roofs 15/- stuff for 2 little windows 3/- yt is - -	0	18	0
,, Carrying ye bricks and laths - - -	0	1	0
,, 13 ceiling joyce 13/- for 2000 laths 4/- yt is in all - - - - - -	0	17	0
,, 20 yards of waste to line ye sparrs - -	0	3	4
Myself (C. Allen) 14 daies 18/8, my son, 13 daies 17/4, yt is - - -	1	16	0
My man, 13 daies 15/2, for ye boy, 13 daies 13/-	1	8	0

	£	s.	d.
The sume is -	17	2	7.

Chr: Allen for ceiling the Chapel.

	£	s.	d.
For 22 ceiling joysts £1–2/- stuff to line ye sparrs 10/- yt is - - -	1	12	0
,, 14 yards of stuff to part ye pargeing of ye bellfree - - - - - - -	0	3	6
,, 1700 of laths 17/- myself 3 daies 4/- - -	1	1	0
My man, 3 daies 3/6, 3 daies ye boy 3/- - -	0	6	6
For 300 of 8-penny nails 2/- and 100 of tenpenny nails 10d. yt is - - - - -	0	2	10

	£	s.	d.
The time for ceiling is	3	5	10.
,, ,, ,, gallery ,,	17	2	7.
Total sum to Chr: Allen	20	8	5.

The next reference to Church renovation occurs in the year 1728, when the fabric having again become dilapidated, it became necessary for the inhabitants to consider what should be done. The structure was examined by competent builders, and it was discovered that it would no longer be safe or economical to do any repairs, but that it would have to be rebuilt entirely. This was of course a decision involving much monetary responsibility; so it was resolved to resort to the usual method of the period for raising money, that is by obtaining a brief, authorising certain persons to collect moneys through the country on behalf of the rebuilding. The first step was to apply to the Court of Quarter Sessions for a certificate, and the following note, written by Mr. Ames, shows how the application was received.

"Memorand. That the 30th of Apr. last past ye general Quarter Sessions of ye Peace being holden att Wolverhampton, Mr. John Hayes, on behalf of ye inhabitants of Bilston, mov'd ye Court to grant a certificate in ordr to procure Lettrs patent for ye taking down and rebuilding Bilston Chapell and enlarging ye same. But his Māties. Justices rejected our petition, especially Mr. Archdeacon Allen, and — Ashenhurst, Esqre, then Chairman, (son of Mr. Archdeacon Ashenhurst), oppos'd it pretty violently, wch mortified me much. I att ye desire of ye inhabitants of Bilston gave Mr. Hayes one guinney for his fee, wch they promised to repay me. N.B. Humble Ashenhurst the noted highwayman, was uncle to this same Justice of Peace, ye chairman."

This is a delicious instance of clerical revenge, and no doubt soothed the Curate's "mortified" feelings. He however, was only checked, not vanquished by this magisterial rebuff, for he made another application to the Quarter Sessions at Stafford, in the following year, and succeeded. The following note refers to the collection of the brief.

"$172\frac{9}{30}$ 12 Febry A Poll was taken in Bilston Chapell (I suppose never ye like before). The occasion was this, viz:—some time since a certificate had been obtained att ye Stafford Quarter Sessions, in ordr to obtaine his Mātes. most gracious lettrs patent for ye repairing, rebuilding or enlarging of Bilston Chapell. I,

and other ye inhabitants, by an Instrumt under our hands had impower'd John Hayes, gent., Attorney-att-Law, to appoint such persons to be undertakers of ye brief as he should think fitt, (provided each paper might be layd and collect'd at sixpence p. paper in all places, (except London, and ye bills of mortality at 1/-). He offer'd this collection to Mr. Nicholls and co-partnrs, but he refused itt, and said itt neither could nor shou'd be collect'd under 8d. p. paper. Whereupon Mr. Hayes contracted wt Mr. Robt Hodgson, of Stafford, and Mr. Samll Worrall, of Gloucester, who undertook it att 6d. and 1/- as above. Upon this Mr. Nicholls surreptitiously obtain'd an appointm't from a pretty great number of ye inhabitants of Bilston, who nevertheless revoked and nullifyed their appointm't to Mr. Nicholls, in three or four days. However, Mr. Ward, one of Mr. Nicholls co-partnrs lodg'd a caveat in chancery against ye delivery of ye Patent to Hodgson and Worrall. Upon this, an hearing came on before Lord Chancellr King, who made an ordr in ye following words, viz., I do ordr that ye minrs, chapell wardens, and such of ye inhabitants as by ye last rate were charg'd to pay towds ye repairing of ye said Chapell, do meet on Thursday, ye 12th day of Febry next, at nine of ye clock in ye morning, at some convenient place in ye sd Townshipp of Bilston, and then and there appoint such persons to be collectrs of ye said charity, as ye majority of ye sd inhabitants by certift to me undr their hands shall think fitt for their purpose. And ye petitioners, ye Curate and Church or Chappell wardens are to give publick notice of this ordr to all ye sd inhabitants, on or before ye 6th day of Febry next, and also of ye place to be appointed for such meeting in ye sd town of Bilston. This ordr was made 22nd of Janry, 1729, notice was given accordingly and Mr. Hayes and Mr. Nicholls took ye poll 12th of Febry. Ye numbr of those who voted for Mr. Hodgson were abt eighty, ye number for Mr. Nicholls did not reach twenty. N.B.—Mr. Nicholls brought a proposall to lay and collect ye brief, att one penny p. paper, in London and elsewhere, wch by computation wd have been much abt £250 more than we can expect att 6d. p. paper, however, in regard ye neighbours had empow'd Mr. Hayes to make the appointmt, and most of us had subscribed itt, they rejected Mr. Nicholls proposal. *Fiat Justitia erat cœlum.*"

Other delays occurred before the rebuilding could be carried out, and the Rev. Richard Ames died before he could see this latest fruition of his labours. His nephew, and successor, however, completed the design, and the following note explains all that is necessary to say further upon the subject.

"Memd. 9 Dec. 1733. That on this day, being Sunday, the Rev. Mr. Wm. Ward preached a sermon in the morning, wch was the first sermon that was preached in the new Chapell. In the afternoon he preached a Charity Sermon. There was so great a concourse of people, that the Chapell was full, and great numbers there were besides that could not at all get in. There were then present the Hon'e John Ward, Esq., bror of Mr. Wm. Ward, and Thomas Wrottesley, Esqre.

	£	s.	d.
Collected at that time -	7	8	0

The want of consecrated burial grounds attached to the Chapels in the several villages within the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Wolverhampton Collegiate Church, was felt by the inhabitants to be a grevious inconvenience and injustice, and in 1709, application was made to the Dean and Chapter to grant permission for such consecration to take place. The question of ancient and accustomed fees paid to the Clergy of Wolverhampton constituted a difficulty, not easily to be overcome.

The Chapter however passed the following resolution:—

"Whereas it has been represented to us, by ye inhabitants of ye Chapellries of Bilston and Willenhall, that several inconveniences frequently happen on account of carrying ye dead within ye said Chapelries to be interr'd att Wolverhampton, and are desirous to have ye Chapels and Chapelyards of ye said towns to be consecrated, in order to ye buryal of their dead therein. The Dean and Chapter have hereunto given their consent, provided ye inhabitants of ye sd Chapelries aforesaid, shall, att all times hereafter pay the customary levies to ye mother Church, and likewise pay ye buriall fees to ye Curates of ye said Chapels, as well as to ye Curates of ye mother Church, and also defray ye charge of ye consecration."

The inconvenience of having no consecrated burial place of their own, could therefore only be removed by the perpetration of an act of gross injustice, the people being thereby compelled to pay double fees; against which they for some time rebelled. Why, they asked, should they pay their own minister's fee, and a fee to Wolverhampton, from whom they would get no service? But the Chapter was inexorable, and so after years of waiting the inhabitants of the two townships consented to the arrangement, not without an attempt being made to induce the Bishop of the Diocese to consecrate the churchyards, without subscribing to the Chapter's terms. In the Register we have this entry:

"June 9, 1726. Edward, Lord Bishop of Cov: and Lichfield, confirmed att Walsall, where I waited upon him. John Lane, Esqre, of Bentley, mov'd his Lordship to consecrate Willenhall and Bilston Chapelyards for burial places, wch his Lordshipp seemed inclinable to do."

The Wolverhampton Clergy, however, proved too powerful for the Chapelries, and so at a Chapter held at Oxford in 1727, the resolution of the previous Chapter held in 1709 was subscribed to by the principal inhabitants of Bilston and Willenhall. The fees to be paid were stated at great length in the report of the Chapter, and were in brief as follow:—

"For ye Churching of every woman in each and every of ye said Chapelries, tenpence; for ye burial of every corpse in ye churchyard, sevenpence; for ye buriall of every corpse in ye Church or Chancell, fourteen pence, and that when any corpse is buried in ye Church or Chancel, a choir fee is due to ye choir of ye sd mother Church, which fee is five shillings."

"Ye said Curates promised that every half-year they (the Curates) would cause a copy of ye Register to be written out and transmitted to one of ye Clergy of ye sd mother Church of Wolverhampton, together with ye fees received for their use; and the agreement ye inhabitants promised to abide by *in all times to come* without any manner of fraud or reserve whatever."

This agreement having been solemnly ratified, the Chapels

were consecrated. The Rev. R. Ames leaves the following account of the ceremony.

"August 14, 1727, this Chapel was consecrated by the Right Reverend Dr. Edward Chandler, Lord Bishop of Lichfield. The Rev. Doctor having read the purpose of his visit, I then read prayers, and afterwards assisted at the ceremony in this manner. A table and chair were placed on the north side of the steeple,—because the sun shone very hot on the south side,—then the Rev. Mr. Craddock read the Litany; then the Clergy,—of whom there was a pretty good number—went in procession, two and two; last of all came the Bishop, and I on his left hand, reading in part the burial service; in which order we went round the Church to the table aforesaid, when the Bishop, standing, read the prayers of consecration, after the form drawn up in convocation; (not in the form published by R. Tisdale). Then the Bishop, sitting down in ye chair, Mr. Edward Short, Wolverhampton Registrar, read ye Act of Consecration; which was in Latine—which ye Bishop having subscribed and seal'd ended ye whole wth his blessing. His Lordship was pleased to accept a small refreshmt of biskett and wine att my house wth ye Clergy then p'sent,—of which those that follow are such as I remember, viz., Mr. Cradock and Mr. Jesson, Prebendaries of Wolverhampton, as well as myself, Mr. Millward, Vicr of Eccleshall (ye B'p's Chaplain), Mr. Dolman, Rectr of Aldridge, Mr. Mosse, Vicr of Walsall, Mr. Oliver, Vicr of Dudley, Mr. Tyrer, Curate of Tettenhall, Mr. Gibbons, Ministr of Codsall, Mr. Danbie, Schoolmaster of Wolverhampton, Mr. Downes, his usher, Mr. Possu, (Posshoed, a Swiss) his Assistt, Mr. Benton, (Curt to Mr. Cradock), Mr. Varden, Rectr of Darlaston, Mr. Perry, Curt of Wednesbury, Mr. Holbrooke, Curt of Willenhall, and a vast concourse of people, it being a very dry and pleast season, and God be thanked, no ill accident happen'd. This was ended as I take itt before 11 o'clock in ye morning. From Bilston, his L'dship went in his coach and four to Willenhall, where ye ceremony was ye same. Ye Lord B'p and ye Clergy were invited by ye Worshipful John Lane, Esq., a descendant of that valiant and loyall John Lane, Esqre who by preserving King Charles ye II, after Worcester fight may be sd to have preserved ye Monarchical Governmt of these Kingdoms, and

yet to be a just reproach of ye Ministry, ye moderate pension of £500 p. annum is not pd, as I am informed. He gave a splendid entertainment, and at that place I part'd wth his Lordship, wo return'd about 4 o'clock or somewt after to go to Wolverhampton.

The charges of the Consecration at Bilston are given as under:

"Augst. 14. Richd Bate ye tol-gate Keepr

Charges for Lord Bishop's coach and 4 -	0	0	4
84 horses attending him ½d each - - -	0	3	6
	0	3	10

R. Ames pd this Aug. 23, 1727.

Bisketts 3lbs. towds a treat - - - -	0	3	6
Wine, Sack, White Port, and Claret - -	0	15	0
To John Beckett for inserting in ye town book wch goes before relating to this matter	0	2	6
Pd by Rich'd Ames -	1	4	10

The following is a copy of the first burial entry.

"Aug. 16, 1727. The first burial took place this day, when John Lees, a locksmith, was interred. The ceremony was performed by Mr. Gibbons, of Codsall, in the presence of a large assembly. Recd 7d. for W'Hampton. Sarah Woodhouse made affidavit of his being buried in woollen, Aug. 20."

This year the mortality in the village must have been very great, for between Augst 16th 1727, and Augst 11, 1728, the number of burials amounted to 74, out of a population of a little over 1000. This mortality appears to have attracted the attention of Mr. Ames, for he says, the number of corpses interred in Bilston Chapell yard since ye consecration to this day (14th Augst) are (sic) 74, besides many buried out of "ye lanes" att Wolverhampton. Males here interred 43, females 31, total 74.

The following burial charges refer to customs which are now as rare as they are noteworthy.

In the Chapelwardens' Accounts for 1697, we have the following charges.

To a shroude for Robt. Mosse's child 3/- and winding him 6d. - - - - -	0	3	6
The buriall of him 11d., and for ye affidavit 4d.,	0	1	3
To Joan Duckman's for goeing on that acct -	0	0	6
For drink then 4/- - - - - - -	0	4	0

[The reference to the affidavit is to King's duty, then payable upon all funerals].

1699. For an affidavit for J. Davies 4d., and for ringing his *forth fare* 4d., - -	0	0	8
1699. For a shroud for Ithael Price 2/8, a sheet for him 1/2 - - - - - -	0	3	10
Ithael Price's funerall charges in all wth ye carriers (bearers) 4/- and ye rest -	0	9	2
1715. Jane Parkes's coffin 5/- - - - -	0	5	0
For Jersey 4d., laying out 4d., burial 7d., grave 9d., ale 1/- yt is - - -	0	3	0
1717. Towards Jos. Ward's funeral expenses April 11th. His coffin 5/6, shroud 2/8½, bran 2d., shroud making 4d., ale 4/2, att Wolverhampton, ye grave 9d., ye buriall fees 7d., to Alex Cox for sitting up one night 6d., for *forth fare* 4d., ye bell 2d., a loaf ye 12th 6d., yt is -	0	15	8½

The same year.

For ale and bread att Alice Beebee's funeral 3/- grave 9d., fees 7d., laying out and a cap 8d., Wm. Stokes 2d., *forth fare* 4d., coffin 5/- yt is in all - - -	0	10	6

These entries are deserving the attention of the antiquary, "the forth fare" item being peculiarly curious. Brand, Bourne, Aubrey, and Sir Thomas Browne are all equally silent on the point. It either refers to the charge for carrying the coffin forth from the house, or, of the man for ringing the bell in front of the coffin, on its being carried to the grave. But a more curious item than all is the following reference to the burial place of the Rev. Richard Ames, in his own handwriting. It describes one of the most remarkable places of sepulchre we have ever met with.

"$172\frac{7}{8}$. Jany. 4th (which was my birthday Anǫ Dom, 1662) Robt Somerfield sett up the stone in the wall of the steeple wth ye inscription to signifie ye time of ye consecration of ye burial-place, wch inscription is in these words,—viz., *Rev'dus in Chro: Pater, D. D. Edwardus [Chandler] Epis: Cov: et Lich: hunc capell: cum area circumjacet in Cemeterium sacravit 14th Die Augti Ano Dom 1727. Rich. Ames ibdm Curto Johe Pretty and Johe Beebee, cap: guardian. Tu vero lector—memento Quatuor Novissima F.F. dict: R. Ames.*

Towards this charge I have payd as follows—to Robt. Somerfield for ye stone, and cutting and setting up, one guiney, yt is one and twenty shillings. To Edwd Beavan, sixpence, to Tho: Turner, ye mason, Three shillings and ninepence; to Tho: Perry, ye clerk, one shilling; to John Cooper for lime, 4d.; to Wm Smith for 200 bricks, two shills: wch makes in ye whole, eight and twenty shills: and sevenpence. But then it is to be remembered, yt a place wch I've caused to be brick'd for my grave, *att ye south-west arch of ye steeple is to be* deducted, wch charge comes to about 3s. 10d., or thereabout. And now God give me grace to wait in due manner, all ye dayes of my appointed time, till my change come! Amen! written ye 5th Janry 1727-8."

The days of his earthly pilgrimage were now drawing to a close. The noble minded, faithful minister, after presiding over the parish for the long period of 44 years, during which he had been the guide, philosopher, and friend of every inhabitant, died in harness, breathing to the last the spirit of christian meekness and love. He died May the 18th 1730, and was buried on the 23rd—the burial entry being simple and touching, viz:—

"May 23. Richard Ames."

He was buried in his brick grave at *ye south west arch of ye steeple,* and a tablet erected to his memory bearing the inscription already given.

It would be interesting to positively discover the site of this worthy Clergyman's sepulchre, but it is possible that it may have been disturbed, when the Church was enlarged in 1827, though no

record is preserved of such a disturbance,—yet from a careful examination of the tower we do not think this is so, as the alterations made in 1746, and again in 1826, did not extend below the belfry room. The Rev. C. Lee is disposed to believe that the burial place of his predecessor is within the south wall of the belfry room, and in that belief we concur.

CHAPTER XII.

Origin of Voting for the Parson.
The Elections of 1731 to 1872.

WE have no account of the manner in which the right of presentation to the living of St. Leonard's was exercised prior to the election of the Rev. Richard Ames, but that the inhabitants had chosen their own minister either with or without the consent of the Dean of Wolverhampton is plain from an old M.S. preserved in the registry of Windsor, undated, but, judging from the caligraphy, of the time of Queen Elizabeth, which informs us that,

"There hath been from time immemorial an ancient custom in this parish of ye inhabitants choosing and appointing their minister, which I conceive to be a good one, seeing that ye inhabitants do pay for his maintenance."

The Dean and Chapter were undoubtedly alarmed now that the chapelries of Bilston and Willenhall were practically independent of the Mother church in the matter of christenings, weddings and funerals, lest they should altogether throw off the yoke of the Mother church. The death of Mr. Ames gave them an opportunity of interfering in the appointment of his successor. The inhabitants were alive to the critical position of affairs and promptly nominated the Rev. Richard Ames, Junr, nephew of the deceased, who was at the time Vicar of Stretton-upon-Dunmore, Warwickshire; while the Dean and chapter nominated the Rev. Benjamin Gibbons, curate of Codsall.

The inhabitants entered into a subscription to support their candidate, and the call was liberally responded to. But the principal official of the Dean refused to license him, contending that the right of nomination lay with the Dean. This led to a case being drawn up and laid before counsel. The following is part of the case, with counsel's opinion attached:—

"The township of Bilston hath a chapel within the peculiar and exempt jurisdiction of Wolverhampton, and ye said ministers and curates of ye said chapel hath, from time beyond ye memory of man, been nominated by ye inhabitants of ye said township of Bilston, without ye least interference of anybody. The last curate, Mr. Ames died about three months ago, and soon after his death, ye chapelwardens and inhabitants, by an instrument under their hands and seals nominated ye Rev. Mr. Ames (nephew of ye late curate) who was a person of unspotted character, to be curate. Soon after ye nomination, Mr. Ames attended ye Rev. Mr. Craddock for the license and leave to preach in ye said chapel, but ye official refused to grant such license, alledging that ye right of nomination lay in the Dean of Wolverhampton. Ye curates of Bilston were formerly paid by subscription of ye said inhabitants, there being no lands or provision for such curate at ye foundation of ye said chapel. Untill about ye year 1685 there was never but about £5 per annum; but of late some gifts have been given, and about four years ago Mr. Ames, ye last curate, gave £100, and ye inhabitants raised £100 more, in order to procure Queen Anne's bounty, which was accordingly done, which, with ye other gifts, hath advanced it to £50 per annum, and now ye Dean claims ye right of nominating ye curate. Ye inhabitants can prove ye nomination of three curates by them successively within ye last 70 years past, and that such curates have successively enjoyed ye said curacy under such nomination till their deaths, without hindrance from ye Dean, or any other person."

The following queries, and replies of Counsel to whom the case was submitted, will be interesting. In answer to the query whether the inhabitants had not the right of nomination, the Counsel said:—

"I am of opinion that ye inhabitants of Bilston are not capable of prescribing, by law, to ye right of nomination, unless ye usage should be evidence that ye advowson or right of nomination has been duly vested in trustees for ye benefit of ye inhabitants of Bilston."

The churchwardens stated that the nomination was not made at a vestry, but at a public meeting, and signed by the churchwardens and principal inhabitants.

Answer:—"Supposing ye inhabitants had a right of nominating a curate, yet, I conceive, they could not regularly exercise the right without public notice given at ye chapel, or notice from house to house, a reasonable time before such election."

The churchwardens stated that many people in the neighbouring parishes were not strangers to ye custom, and could be examined to prove it.

Answer:—"Though their evidence could not prove ye right of nomination, yet it would strengthen ye usage or custom, and so far would be favourable to ye case."

After a great deal of trouble and expense, the chapter, seeing no chance of establishing the claim, abandoned it. The contest then rested with the inhabitants and Dr. Booth, the Dean, whom the former served with a subpœna. Not being able to obtain the suspension of the people's nominee, which he sought, he licensed the Rev. Mr. Ames in 1731.

At a chapter holden at Wolverhampton, it was agreed to decline further contest about the nomination, leaving it to the Dean, with whom they were willing to concur in the choice of any person to succeed the Rev. Richard Ames, late curate there. When Mr. Ames, jun., died January 27, 1736, a *caveat* was deposited with the registrar of Wolverhampton, by the chapelwardens of Bilston, against the licensing of any curate to be perpetual curate of Bilston, except such person as should be nominated by the inhabitants of Bilston.

On the following Sunday the Rev. Michael Nicklins, curate of Tipton, officiated at Bilston Chapel, and gave notice that ye election of curate would come on on Friday next ensuing, being February 4th. At which time and place the Rev. B. Gibbons, of Codsall, and the Rev. Edward Best, curate of Marchington, appeared as candidates. Mr. John Fletcher, of Lichfield, Proctor, attended to take ye poll on behalf of ye inhabitants; Mr. Theophilus Levett, attorney, of Lichfield, on behalf of Mr. Best, and Mr. Walter Robbins, on behalf of Mr. Gibbons. Every householder within ye liberty of Bilston was admitted to poll, and to have legal vote. At the close the numbers were :—

For Edward Best..... 198
,, B. Gibbons..... 149

An objection was then raised "that Mr. Best, being only in Deacon's orders, was not duly qualified as candidate, which, by agreement between ye two candidates, and with ye approbation of all parties then present to refer it to two civilians, nomination to be postponed. In ye meantime, Mr. Gibbons's friends wrote to Dr. Booth, Dean of Windsor and Wolverhampton, intimating that they apprehended ye right of nominating a curate lay in him, which right he might probably recover, if he would nominate Mr. Gibbons. The Dean came readily into ye proposal, and Mr. Gibbons now set up as ye Dean's nominee. This determined ye inhabitants to nominate Mr. Best, of which public notice was given in ye chapel on Friday, February 19th, and from thence adjourned to ye school-house, where ye poll was likewise taken, and under their hands and seals executed ye regular nomination of Mr. Best; Mr. Fletcher and Mr. Levett being present, and signed as disinterested witnesses to ye due execution of such nomination. On Sunday, March 6th, Mr. Best was ordained priest, and waited on ye Dean with his nomination, who seemed both unwilling to give up his right, or, rather, his pretended right, and also to contest ye matter at his own expense, and therefore desired further time to consider it, and that no proceedings should be taken in ye meantime. The inhabitants, at ye Dean's request, waited for some time, and also sent him a copy of their case, which he acknowledged to be in their favour, and yet sought further satisfaction as to depositions of ye

witnesses, but these being filed in ye Six Clerk's Office could not be produced without a bill in equity, and finding that Mr. Gibbons and his friends would not contest the matter at their expense, dropt his claim, and consented to license Mr. Best."

Mr. Best held the living until 1774, when he resigned, and his son, the Rev. John Best, was elected without opposition, but he, being Vicar of Sedgley, and residing there, appointed the Rev. Wm. Leigh as Curate.

Mr. Leigh officiated as temporary curate until the year 1813, when, Mr. Best dying, a smart contest arose. There were five candidates, viz., the Revs. P. Robinson, Mr. Crockett, Mr. Pearson, Mr. Slatter, and W. Leigh, and the number of votes recorded up to the last day was:—

Rev.	W. Leigh	856
,,	Pearson	607
,,	Robinson	125
,,	Crockett	9
,,	Slatter	3

"Next day," says a parish record, "being Good Friday, there was no polling, but on the Saturday about 50 polled for Mr. Leigh, in order to make his number amount to a majority of the whole."

The next election occurred in 1836, when the candidates were the Rev. H. S. Fletcher, at that time Vicar of St. Mary's in this town, and the Rev. G. Fisk, of Darlaston, a popular and talented Clergyman. The cause of the former was heartily taken up by the principal inhabitants, and after a polling which lasted several days, and scenes alike disgraceful and humiliating had taken place, the numbers were declared on the 6th of February, 1836, as under:—

For the Rev.	H. S. Fletcher ...	1780
,, ,, ,,	G. Fisk	1350

The last exercise of the popular vote occurred in the year 1871, when the candidates were the Rev. E. C. Perry, Vicar of Seighford, a descendant of the Perrys of Bilston, the Rev. J. P.

Wilson, D.D., Vicar of Moxley, the Rev. J. W. Carter, Vicar of Christ Christ, Stratford, London, the Rev. C. B. Ward, (then Curate in Charge, the living having been for several years sequestered) the Rev. C. Lee, M.A., Vicar of Holy Trinity, Haverstock Hill, formerly Vicar of St. Mary's, Bilston; and the Rev. J. Williamson, B.A., Vicar of St. Martin's, Bradley. After a few preliminary meetings, all the candidates withdrew except the Rev. Mr. Ward and the Rev. C. Lee. The election was conducted in the absence of the Rev. C. Lee by duly appointed legal representatives, and every facility for polling the inhabitants was given. The voting which occupied two days resulted as follows:—

	Rev. C. Lee.	Rev. C. B. Ward.
1st Day	2195	781
2nd Day	542	230
	2737	1011

The Rev. C. Lee was therefore duly elected.

The excitement and undignified incidents of an election for so sacred an office were so painfully out of harmony with the spirit of the times, that many earnest persons, both churchmen and dissenters, felt the urgent desirability of putting an end to this anomaly. Steps were taken to vest the right of presentation in different hands, and Mr. Edward Pugh offered to purchase the advowson for £3000, on condition the church was restored out of the sum, and the balance invested, the interest thereof to be applied to a reduction of the rates, the sale to take place under the provisions of Sir Smith Child's Act. The sale was completed, with the consent of the town, in 1881, and the restoration commenced, the plans being prepared under the supervision of Mr. Ewan Christian, the eminent Ecclesiological Architect, and the builders, Messrs. Higham, of Wolverhampton. The living is now vested in the hands of five Trustees, the first being the Rev. Alexander Baring Gould, of Winchester, Sir John Morris of Wolverhampton, (now dead), Rev. W. H. Barlow of Clapham, (now Islington), the Rev. S. C. Adam, Vicar of St. Jude's, Wolverhampton, and Dr. Millington, of Wolverhampton.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Rev. Richard Ames, Junr.
The Rev. Edward Best.
The Trials with the Mother Church.

DURING the interval of nearly twelve months between the death of Mr. Ames in 1730 and the appointment of his successor the services were conducted by various ministers, Mr. Ames frequently preaching during that time, and making all the necessary entries in the registers. He was however at last licensed by the Dean of Wolverhampton in 1731, and entered zealously upon his labours. The church was being rebuilt at the time, and singular to say, the opening ministerial office performed in the new church was the burial service over the remains of the new Curate's wife. The following entry appears in the Register :—

"Nov. 25th, 1732. Sarah Ames—buried by the Rev. Mr. Groome, curate of Sedgley, and affidavit made by Sarah Ffellows. The office of the burial was the first ministerial office performed in the new erected Chapell of Bilston, and she was interr'd in the Chancell under the place designed for the communion table. She was the wife of Richard Ames, Junr., Clerk, Curate of Bilston, and dyed after a long continued and painful illness, occasioned by an ulcer in her hip, in which place she underwent large and deep incisions and grevious pains with uncommon patience. The ulcer brought on by degrees a consumption and marasmus. Her death was much lamented by all who knew her worth. She was a pious and good christian, an affectionate wife,

obedient to her parents, and a tender mother. She was of a meek and affable temper, courteous to all and truly loving to her friends." Mr. Ames died suddenly, while on a visit to Stretton, January 27, 1736. He was succeeded by the Rev. Edward Best, Curate of Marchington, as was recorded in the last chapter. Strange to say there is no record of Mr. Ames' burial in the Register. Mr. Best's first entry occurring Feby 6th, that year. The defeat of the Dean's nominee a second time stung the Dean to the quick, and it is evident from the registers of the church, that a bitter feeling sprang up between the two Churches from this time; for as early afterwards as 1740 the following memorandum appears:—

"Whereas, there has been a special process issued out of the superior court against William Walker and Joseph Parkes, late chapelwardens of Bilston, for not paying their levies to the Mother Church, for 1740, at the instance and promotion of Francis Butler and Samuel Bennett, chapelwardens of Wolverhampton. We, the undersigned, therefore, do agree that the said W. Walker and J. Parkes shall be borne harmless from all costs and necessary expenses that shall be incurred in defending the said suit, &c.

Signed, Edward Best."

Here follow numerous signatures.

This process arose out of excessive demands for money towards the repair of the mother church, which the Wolverhampton churchwardens demanded from the Bilston chapelwardens. On the refusal of the latter to pay, the process alluded to was issued. A case was drawn up on behalf of Bilston and laid before eminent Counsel.

This case stated, among other things, that "the Collegiate Church of Wolverhampton consists of a Dean and Prebendaries, founded by a Royal Family, and is subject to no visitation but that of the Crown. It contains three Chapels, one at Bilston, another at Willenhall, and a third at Pelsall. Every hamlet and village in the parish (that is the *ecclesiastical* parish of Wolverhampton) has a constable and all other officers, and maintains its own poor. The chapelries of Willenhall and Bilston

nominate and maintain its own Clergy, and repair their own chapels, which have been endowed time out of mind, and were consecrated about thirteen years ago, for burying places, but ever since their foundation have had divine service performed and sacraments administered in them, as we can prove. The Curates have, time out of mind, married by licence persons living in their respective chapelries, but not by publication of banns, till after the chapel-yards were consecrated. Formerly Bilston and Willenhall usually paid each the sum of four pounds per annum to the Mother Church, and that (as they apprehend) towards the repairs of the fabric of the Mother Church only, at which time three treble levies for the (whole) parish were £29 1s. 4½d.; and the chapelries never paid above £10 in one year, until the year of our Lord, 1710: since which time the Churchwardens of Wolverhampton have called upon them for £28, £32, £40, and £50, in short, what sum they pleased without the consent of ye inhabitants, and have made them pay it, but have never called for less than £10 since the year 1724. All that these chapelries receive from the Mother Church is only bread and wine for the Sacrament, four times a year, for which they paid £4 per annum, saving that the Chapelwardens of each place have for collecting it—at Bilston of threepence in the pound, and at Willenhall fourpence in the pound. All the rest of the villages have been forced to pay in proportion with these two towns. Between thirty and forty years ago, an organ was by voluntary contribution bought and set up in the Church of Wolverhampton. For about twenty years the salary of an organist, viz., ten pounds per annum, has been paid out of the Churchwardens' levies; many ornaments also, within this time, have been placed in the (Mother) Church, viz., a large branched brass candlestick, a large picture for an altar-piece, etc., and also on the outside of the church, that is, gravel walks have been made, trees planted in the churchyard, two old stone windows have been altered to a modern fashion, and the Church itself has been chipt, the expenses of all which have been very great, and, as we apprehend, have all been paid out of the Church levies, of which the out-hamlets pay such a proportionable part as above." The case then proceeds to state that when the Chapels of Bilston and Willenhall were consecrated, the inhabitants of each entered into an agreement in writing to pay the same fees as usual to the

Clergy of Wolverhampton, for burying the dead and churching of women, besides the fees to their respective ministers for those offices, but that many of those who signed the instrument are since dead. The Curates also of each chapel entered into an agreement in writing, and bound themselves and their successors not to bury a corpse, nor church any women without the payment of the fees for the Clergy of Wolverhampton. This they had resolved no longer to pay, and the case inferred that the excessive and rapid increases in the demand for levies made by the Wolverhampton Churchwardens was largely due to the influence of the Clergy of the Mother Church, who were irritated by the position the out-hamlets had taken up. The opinion of the Serjeants-at-law was favourable to the inhabitants in respect of the invalidity of the agreement about the double burial, and churching of women fees, and also as far as regarded the excessive demands for Church levies, the charges for the organist's salary, for interior ornaments, and churchyard renovation being declared to be distinctly illegal. Upon the receipt of these opinions, the inhabitants of Bilston, in vestry assembled, entered into the following bond:—"Whereas there has been a special process issued out of the Superior Court against William Walker and Joseph Parkes, late Chapelwardens of Bilston, for not paying their levies to the Mother Church for 1740, at the instance and promotion of Francis Butler and Samuel Bennett, Churchwardens of Wolverhampton. We, the undersigned, therefore do agree that the said William Walker and Joseph Parkes shall be borne harmless from all costs and necessary expenses that shall be incurred in defending the said suit. Signed Edward Best, Curate," and by a large number of the parishioners. The Rev. Edward Best then, on behalf of Bilston, invited the people of Willenhall to join in the defence for their mutual benefit; but Dr. Wilkes, who was the principal and leading man in conducting the parish affairs of the liberty of Willenhall, declined to enter into an agreement with Bilston, alleging that a wrong step had been taken by the Chapelwardens of Bilston, in taking the opinions of Mr. Wilbraham and Mr. Ford, on the ground that as Mr. Wilbraham was M.P., they sent both cases enclosed in a letter to him to save travelling expenses and postage, by which means they had only in effect the opinion of Mr. Ford, who had before this (as was

presumed) been consulted by, and given his opinion to ye Churchwardens of Wolverhampton. This reason does not seem now to be sufficient, and it was thought, not unreasonably, that Mr. Wilkes was annoyed at not being consulted before Bilston took any steps in the matter. However, finding themselves thus left singlehanded, the Chapelwardens of Bilston compromised the suit by paying 2½ guineas to Wolverhampton towards their cost, the latter promising that whatever Church levies were made in future, or whenever the Churchwardens' accounts were passed at Wolverhampton, due notice should be given to the out-hamlets.

We have now arrived at a period when the contest between Wolverhampton and the out-hamlets of Bilston and Willenhall began in grim earnest, when litigation dragged its slow length along for sixteen years. In 1751, the Churchwardens of Wolverhampton demanded the enormous sum £56 towards, as they alleged, the repair of the fabric of the Mother Church, instead of the £8, which was the ancient and accustomed demand. The previous increases had been paid by the inhabitants of the out-hamlets with growing dissatisfaction and dislike. But when, irritated probably by defeat in the matter of the right of presentation to the living, the Wolverhampton Churchwardens coolly demanded increased contributions amounting to £56, the Bilston Churchwardens refused to pay, especially when the objects for which the money was levied became known. The levies were originally demanded because the Mother Church anciently set apart the north and south aisles of the Mother Church for the inhabitants of the Chapelries, but this no longer held good, for the whole of the Church was now by reason of the increase of the population appropriated by the people of Wolverhampton. The salary of the organist, the provision of sundry ornaments, the putting up of a clock in the tower, and other things were also regarded as illegal charges upon the out-hamlets, who, having consulted counsel, on his advice tendered to the Wolverhampton Chapelwardens the ancient and customary contribution of £8. This was scornfully declined, as was also a proposition made by the Rev. E. Best and Dr. Wilkes on behalf of the Chapelries, that a case should be fairly stated and laid before eminent counsel, by whose decision the contending parties should be bound. So

litigation went on. The case was referred to the Rev. Mr. Jones, of Windsor, who was regarded by both parties as an impartial judge. When the matter had been carefully considered, and it was hoped that a decision would soon be arrived at Mr. Jones died, and Mr. Craddock, who was installed as official of Wolverhampton, was sought by the Wolverhampton Churchwardens to be substituted as judge, but fearing Mr. Craddock's known partiality, the Chapelries resolved to take the case out of the Spiritual Court, and to file a bill in Equity. This was accordingly done, but on the Counsel for Wolverhampton opposing it, the Lord Chancellor dismissed the bill with costs, on the ground that the Chapelries should first have tried the case in the Spiritual Court.

In the year 1754, by the interference of friends to both parties, the Earl of Stamford was induced to make a very generous and friendly offer to the contending parties, to the effect that each should get its case fairly stated and drawn up, and laid before some eminent legal authority, that they should pledge themselves to abide by his decision, which ever way it should be, and that he (Lord Stamford) would pay the whole expenses of the reference. The people of Willenhall, through Dr. Wilkes, returned his Lordship thanks for his kind and friendly offer and declared their willingness to accept it, but the Wolverhampton officials at once rejected it, in the fond and foolish belief that they should be sure to win their case in the Spiritual Court. When proceedings were about to be recommenced in the latter end of 1754, Mr. John Brevitt, one of the plaintiffs, died, and this unfortunate event led to a further delay in the matter. The Wolverhampton Churchwardens had to proceed *de novo*, and when in January, 1755, the case was again ready for hearing, Mr. Craddock, the Dean's official, appointed the Rev. Henry Bowles Downing, rector of Enfield, his surrogate, to act as judge. He, notwithstanding his frank admission that he was unacquainted with such matters, and quite unskilled in the canon law, agreed to accept the office and hear the case. Orders were now issued for the examination of facts in support of, or against, the libel filed by Wolverhampton.

The Chapelries now demanded the production of certain books to prove the origin and amount of the contributions each

out-hamlet ought to pay, and after long demur these were produced. From these books, it was found that so far from the Chapelries being compelled to pay any sum the authorities of the Mother Church thought proper to put upon them, the amount was distinctly stated. The following is a copy.

1668. "This is the proportion of rates each Chapelry and Prebend shall pay towards the repairs of the Mother Church.

	£	s.	d.
Wolverhampton - - - - -	36	0	0
Bilston - - - - - - -	12	0	0
Wylnale - - - - - - -	12	0	0
Wednesfide - - - - - -	12	0	0
Hatherton - - - - - -	3	0	0
Featherstone - - - - - -	1	4	0
Kinvaston - - - - - -	1	1	0
Hilton - - - - - - -	1	7	0
Pelsall - - - - - - -	2	2	0
Bentley - - - - - - -	1	10	0
Stretton rent - - - - - -	1	6	8
	£83	10	8"

The production of this agreement at once proved the illegality of the demands made by Wolverhampton.

After much trouble and expense, a writ of prohibition was filed to stay all further proceedings in the Spiritual Courts; each party agreeing to pay costs. These costs for Bilston and Willenhall, amounted to £226 13s. 0½d., which sum was divided equally between them.

In the year 1753, the inhabitants of Bilston refused to any longer pay churching, burial, and wedding fees to the Wolverhampton Clergy on the ground that they paid the fees to their own minister, who baptised the living, and buried the dead, and that it was therefore unjust that they should continue to pay double fees. Another dispute arose, the Wolverhampton Clergy pointing to the agreement of 1727, in which the major part of the inhabitants bound themselves and their successors to pay these

ancient fees to Wolverhampton. Counsel on behalf of Bilston were consulted and their opinion was that the signatories to the agreement could not legally bind their successors to pay fees both to Wolverhampton and Bilston, but only to the minister who performed the office of baptism or burial. With respect to marriages, however, it was held that as the Curate of Bilston could only marry in the Chapel by license of Wolverhampton, marriages must either be discontinued, or double fees paid. The inhabitants annoyed by the grevious oppressions imposed upon them by the Dean and Chapter refused to pay these double marriage fees, with the approval of the Curate, the Rev. Edward Best, and consequently from Jany. 30th, 1754 to Feby. 11, 1841, no marriages were solemnised in Bilston.

CHAPTER XIV.

The First Workhouse.

The Church Tower. The Bells. Ringing Curfew. Pestilences.

WE have in this chapter to retrace our steps to the opening year of the 18th century, when the ancient method of relieving the destitute poor by gifts of money as their necessities became more or less pressing was substituted by a system, now generally prevalent, of indoor support under the control of responsible officers. Bilston thus seems to have adopted very early the plan of feeding and clothing the poor, the workhouse we are about to mention preceding the first Wolverhampton, and was probably the oldest in the district.

This Workhouse was established in the year 1700, as appears from the following curious agreement.

"March ye 23rd, $\frac{1699}{1700}$ Memorandum. Yt I John Wooley, of ye Bull, in Bilston, do agree yt ye Inhabitants of Bilston shall have free liberty to place what poore persons they shall think fitt in yt part of my house wherein ye widdo: Bennett now is placed this day by Tho: Stokes, for ye Terme of Two yeares and an halfe from Lady-day now next ensuing, and yt ye said poore persons shall have and enjoy so much of my garden adjoining unto yt building as will conveniently take halfe an hundred of plants. But whereas I have this yeare already sett my garden, I doe require satisfaction for digging and setting. And I doe agree yt ye said inhabitants and officers shall dispose of ye said building

without anie Rent: because I have already had and received of Tho: Stokes above-mentioned ye sume of Thirty shillings; and there remaines in his hands Ten shillings, wch I am to receive when I have thatch't ye sd building. Ye whole consideracion money being 40 shillings. The building is two roomes, a lower and an upper. To this I agree, witnesse my hand, ye daye and yeare first above-written."

The mark of
John × Wolley,
de Bull.

This building was situate in a fold in High Street, still known as Workhouse Fold. The following references to this institution may be of interest:—

"Dec. 23, 1816. At a legal Vestry meeting held in the schoolhouse this day pursuant to public notice, it was unanimously resolved that Robert Shinton be appointed to the office of Governor of the Workhouse at a salary of £30 a year, and if his conduct be approved of, his salary should be made up to 40 guineas ℔ annum."

"June 29, 1818. At a legal Vestry meeting held this day in thc schoolhouse to consider the propriety of using means for securing the workhouse and premises from receiving damage by the getting of coal from a pit now at work in the adjoining premises, it was unanimously resolved that immediate application be made to Mr. Isaac Mason, the proprietor of the said pit, that leave be given for the Overseers of the poor to send a competent person down to inspect and latch (measure) the said workings at such times as they shall think proper, and in case he refuses that liberty, that a shaft be immediately sunk in the workhouse garden and headways driven therefrom, so as to secure the said premises."

"Nov. 17, 1825. At a public meeting held in the school room it was resolved unanimously that it is highly expedient that a prison should be erected in the township, and that some old buildings at the workhouse be taken down to make room for such an erection. Resolved, that the prison or strong room in the workhouse of this township for the confinement of refractory prisoners is most necessary. That it is desirable that the said

place of confinement shall be as little in connection with the other part of the workhouse, and it appearing that certain premises on the right hand entrance are a convenient site for such an erection, that the said buildings be taken down and a prison erected on their site, containing on the ground floor two divisions, one for males and the other for females, and above the same a lock-up room for such paupers and others as the magistrates and officers of the township may think fit."

"May 8, 1828. At a Vestry meeting held this day, it was resolved by a majority of 5, that Mr. James Holmes and his wife be appointed to the situations of Governor and Governess of the workhouse and assistant Overseer of the township, at a salary of 60 guineas ℔ annum."

At the passing of the Poor Law Act and the erection of a workhouse for the whole of the Wolverhampton Union in 1840, the following resolutions were passed at a town's meeting held to consider the propriety of selling. "All those partly freehold, and partly copyhold buildings, erections, and premises, with the yards, gardens, and appurtenances thereto, situate in the township of Bilston, and lately used as a workhouse for the said township," under the provisions of an Act passed in the 5th and 6th year of his late Majesty, entitled "An Act to facilitate the conveyance of workhouses and other properties of parishes and all incorporations or unions of parishes, in England and Wales, in such manner as the Poor-law Commissioners shall in that behalf direct." It was resolved that this meeting do consent to the Guardians of the Poor of the said Union selling the premises described; and that the meeting request the chapelwardens and overseers of the township to memorialise the Poor Law Commissioners respecting the bequests and doles belonging to the poor of the township, which bequests and doles have been paid from time immemorial out of the proceeds of the poor rates in consequence of the money left having been used, as is verily believed, in the purchase and erection of the late workhouse, that they would direct such a sum to be set aside and invested out of the amount realised by the sale of the workhouse as will produce an annual amount of the said doles, to be applied according to the wills of the donors and set forth in the tables of the Church."

The poor subsequently were relieved by rate levied upon the new Wolverhampton Union.

The workhouse buildings which were erected in 1828, during the overseership of Adam Hill and Montagu Taylor, as an inscription in front testifies, are still standing in Workhouse Fold. Just before the first workhouse was started the odious practice of imposing badges upon the poor was adopted. The following entries in the chapelwardens' accounts refer to this practice:—

1698.	For 14 Badges and thread and setting them on	0	3	10
1706.	,, Badges for ye poore - - -	0	1	6
1709.	,, Badges for ye poore - - -	0	2	6
1717.	,, the cloth for marks and making -	0	1	6
1726.	,, brass letters for marks - - -	0	7	7

When the Church was restored in the year 1733 the tower does not appear to have come within the plan of restoration, if we may judge from the fact that in 1744 it had become delapidated, and at a Vestry meeting held on January 25th in that year, "it was agreed, between John Bromley of Birmingham and the inhabitants of Bilston, that he take down the four pinnacles of the Tower of the Church, and likewise the battlement walls thereof, down to the Water tables, and rebuild the same in a firm and substantial manner; the inhabitants agreeing to pay, besides the material, the sum of £31."

The tower thus restored was the one which appears in our frontispiece, a square Early English erection of some elegance, but not without signs of those improvements (!) which characterise so much the handiwork of modern builders. The body of the church represented in the engraving is the erection of the Rev. Richard Ames Junr's day, which lasted until 1826, when the present structure, with its hideous pepper-box tower was built. Fortunately, when this last enlargement took place the then existing tower was not entirely destroyed, the alteration—necessitated by an increase in the number of the bells—extending downwards no lower than the upper part of the ringers' chamber, consequently the substructure of the tower of the church existing in the 14th century still remains, together with the pointed arched

doorway leading into the ringers' chamber, with its moulded jamb of 14th century work. Broken stones of contemporary work are also built into the inner walls of the belfry staircase here and there, while several remaining ancient loopholes for giving light seem to indicate that originally the tower was partially if not wholly detatched from the body of the church.

The presence of these ancient loopholes (three in number, and now filled in) was so singular and interesting that, in conjunction with the Vicar, the Rev. C. Lee, we examined them a second time with much care. The apertures, which stand east by south and south-east, are of the same character with the doorway in the belfry room, and probably contemporaneous. From their position it is evident that the tower must originally have been united to the nave on the east side only, or altogether detached. If the former, it seems as if the loopholes would have been so shadowed by the church itself, as to be of little use for lighting purposes. But if detached, why should not these loopholes have been placed in a different position, instead of looking towards the Church? This question is easily solved. On passing through the door leading to the belfry, it will be noticed that the first curve of the spiral stairway has a dexter direction, consequently the axis upon which the steps rest is upon the western side of the tower, and this made it impossible for the architect to obtain any light from that direction. This may seem to argue in favour of the second hypothesis, yet, detached belfries were so rare in the Midland Counties, especially in Staffordshire, that we are far from satisfied that it was so in this case. The tower was built into the body of the church when the latter was enlarged in 1826, the extension being both lateral and longitudinal, and this completely destroyed the utility of these loopholes.

It was during the renovation of the upper part of the tower in 1745 that the four ancient bells were, it is to be regretted, recast, as the following entry in the parish books clearly shows:—

"July 19, 1745. At a Vestry meeting held this day at the Bull's Head, according to public notice, it was agreed with Mr. Bagley, of Wolverhampton, Bellfounder, to cast the four old bells into six new ones."

		£	s.	d.
Item.	"Paid to Henry Bagley for metal and casting ye bells - - -	145	0	0

Another item shows how the people were called to church during the silence of the bells.

Item. "Paid to William Hum for ringing ye bell about ye town on Sundays, to give notice for people to come to Church, while ye bells were casting—2 shillings and 6 pence."

On these newly cast bells are the following inscriptions:—

1.—Edward Best, Minister. Thomas Smith and William Smith, Chapelwardens. H.B. 1745.

2.— Sweet harmony our notes express,
But sweeter are ye lays,
When in Thy Temple men address
Their God in songs of praise.

Edward Best, Minister, gave me 1745.

3.— Unconstant fickle men who love
Through every scene to range,
Their own example to approve,
Have taught us bells to change.

On the rim.

First this, then that, then th' other leads,
The fourth next shows the way,
Then him the fifth succeeds
And all come into play.

Just so at court men shift about
All eager in the chase,
Tustle by turning other out
And step into his place.

4.— Be it known to all that hear me ringe
That Henry Bagley first made me singe 1745.

5.— Henry Bagley made me, 1745.

6.— This ends ye peal. H. B. 1745.

In 1826 two other bells were added, bearing these inscriptions:—

7.—Joseph Price, Thomas Banks, Chapelwardens. J. Rudall, fect.

8.—John Rudall, Gloucester, 1826.

It has already been mentioned that on one of the old bells was an inscription "I ben callyd ye Curfew belle," &c. The custom of ringing curfew was regularly kept up in Bilston from early times, and the following extracts show that it survived within the memory of persons still living.

June 17, 1817—Paid William Evans one quarter's salary for ringing ye 8 o'clock bell - -	0	15s.	0
Oct. 24, 1817—Paid Wm. Evans, ditto - -	0	15s.	0
Sept. 7, 1823.—Paid Jas. Evans 1 quarter's salary for ringing curfew - - - - -	£0	15	0
Dec. 24, 1823.—Paid J. Evans for ringing curfew	£0	15	0
1828.—1 quarter's salary to John Harper for ringing curfew - - - - - - -	£1	0	0

In the same registers is the following reference to the same custom:—"Oct. 25, 1839.—At a Vestry meeting held this day, for the purpose of granting a rate of one penny in the pound to defray the following charges, viz., repairs and winding up of the clock, and arrears due; *8 o'clock, or Curfew Bell,* beadle visitation charges, rent of ye engine (fire) house, &c., it was decided to withdraw the rate in consequence of its having been decided to be illegal." The present writer can well remember the curfew bell being rung in Bilston from Michaelmas to Lady Day. The sexton rang the bell from a quarter to eight until eight o'clock, finishing up on another bell by tolling the day of the month. This was an addition of rare occurrence, and peculiar, I believe, to the Midland Counties. The sexton also rang the same bell every morning at half-past five, continuing till six o'clock. This bell was called the colliers' waking bell, because its ringing was a signal for the colliers to go to work. After the cost of ringing was struck out of the churchwardens' accounts the custom was for some years kept up by a subscription of the inhabitants; and it was finally discontinued about the year 1864.

In the years 1728 & 9 Bilston was visited by a serious mortality. At the completion of the second year's burials (after the consecration of the Chapelyard) the Rev. Richard Ames thus writes:—

"This last (burial) is as I take it ye 172nd corpse that has been interr'd in our cemetery att Bilston these two yeares that it has been consecrated, besides many (20 at least) out of ye Lanes, &c., which have been interr'd att Wolverhampton. *A very great mortality, indeed!* Most of these persons were younger than myself, and many of 'em more like to survive me; than I to survive them; and yet in all this time I have not been seiz'd by ye epidemical distemper, notwithstanding my conversation with 'em in ye course of my office. Yea, more! for 6 or 8 weeks now past I have been more free from my Ptysick (wch has been my infirmity from my cradle) than I have been for many yeares."

This was a kind of aguish distemper, the principal characteristic of which was a chilly-feverishness ending in collapse. In 1757 the town was visited by another curious epidemic, known indifferently at that time as "putrid fever," and "flux of fever." The first victim who is marked in the Register as having died of this disease was buried on Nov. 15th, 1756.

The next entry is as follows:—

"John Hughes, Governor of ye workhouse, (of flux of fever.")

From that date until June 1st, 1757, when the last entry occurs, a period of a little over six months there are 51 burials marked with the ominous words ("flux of fever,") out of a total of 81 burials during that period. The population at that time was probably not more than 1100, so that the mortality altogether was over 16 per cent. In both of these cases the season previous to the outbreak had been wet, so that it is fair to assume that the disease arose from bad drainage or malaria.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PARISH REGISTERS CONTINUED.
ANCIENT CUSTOMS AND MANNERS ILLUSTRATED.
THE MINISTER'S HOUSE.
BEATING THE PARISH BOUNDS.

THE character of a people or community can best be ascertained by a careful study of its sports and amusements; and it is on this account that so much attention is being bestowed upon the subject by the historian and antiquary. In this chapter a number of minor facts, bearing upon the manners, customs, punishments, and amusements of the inhabitants of Bilston, have been gathered together, from which it will be seen what manner of men our forefathers were, and how they behaved themselves at a period when social rules and circumstances were different to those now prevailing. First of all, then, coming to punishments we find the following entries in the registers relating to that instrument alluded to by Hudibras, in which unfortunates—

"Were often set, by officers in th' stocks,
For quarrelling about a paradox."

"1694.	For a new paire of stocks - - - -	0	11	8

An entry which, in the solemn language of Mr. Poundtext, "argueth and denoteth" the existence of a previous pair.

1706.	For mending ye stocks - - - - -	0	5	0
,,	For mending ye hinge of ye stocks - - -	0	0	6
1711.	For mending ye stocks - - - - -	0	0	6

1718. For ye new stocks to Jos: Mansfield - 0 10 2

1764. Sept. 9. At a Vestry Meeting held this day in the Schoolhouse, it was agreed that Thomas Hodgkins, Constable, shall, as soon as conveniently may be, purchase a new pair of stocks at ye expense of ye parish, and cause them to be placed at ye Lich Gates.

The old Workhouse book records the fact that in 1775 one Linton, being placed in ye stocks did do damage to ye same to ye amount of 7s. 6d., and was thereupon tied to ye tail of ye parish cart and received 20 lashes at ye hands of Wm. Mason, ye Constable."

The stocks remained at the Lich Gates upon the passing of the Sir Robert Peel Police Act, when they were removed to the Police Court yard in Stafford Street, and afterwards to the present Police Station, where in our childhood we have seen delinquents punished.* The frame of this ancient instrument of punishment has been converted into a garden-seat, and now adorns the garden of the esteemed Chief Superintendent (Mr. Longden).

There seems to be some doubt as to whether the Curate of Bilston was provided with a residence, as part of the benefice of the Church, before the year 1718, no earlier reference being found in the Church Registers, or in the terriar of lands and properties belonging to the Church. Humphrey Perye, Esq., in that year left by his last will and testament dated Oct. 24, 1716. "All those my two little houses in Bilston aforesaid, situate at ye Chapell-yard gate to the street, and therewith all buildings, shopps, gardens and backsides, adjoining and belonging to the same, lying between ye said houses and schoolhouse, in Trust only, for ye use and benefitt of ye Minister or Curate of Bilston Chapell, or his successors for ye time being for ever; willing that ye said Trustees shall take down the old buildings upon ye same,

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* Apropos of this instrument it is a curious fact that a pair of stocks with a skeleton secured in the socket holes was some years ago found in the ruins of Pompeii.—A strange link uniting ancient and modern domestic history!

att ye time of my decease, and do erect and build thereon a new and convenient house wt all necessarie and usual conveniences to ye same to be for a habitation for ye Minister of Bilston and his successrs to live in. And towds ye building of ye said new house, I give unto ye sd Trustees one hundred pounds." It is to be observed that the will distinctly calls the house a "new" house, and it may be argued therefore that there must have then existed an "old" house belonging to the Minister. This is by no means conclusive, and in the absence of corroboration ought not to be so accepted. On the other hand we know from Mr. Ames himself that he resided for some time with Mr. Richard Hawkesford, (whose daughter Mr. Ames' nephew, William, married), and it is fair to assume that had there been a residence for the minister Mr. Ames would have resided in it. The following entry seems to imply this, for though the building is described as a new one, the purpose for which it was being built is specially mentioned.

"Feby. 16, $171\frac{8}{9}$. On this day Tho: Mansfield and Tho: Turner sett out ye foundation of ye new building for an house for ye Curat, adjoining to ye School House."

Here it is described not as a new minister's house, but a new building to be used as "an house for the Curate." The house was completed in May following, and on the 9th of that month Mr. Ames thus records the fact.

"Note. That on 9th of May, being Monday, I remov'd with my household to ye New House wch was built for ye Curats of Bilston, adjoining to ye School-house and Chapell-yard. *Faxit Deus ter opt max ut hoc loci fideliter Inserviam officio mea, in Dei gloriam et proximorum proficius residuis diebus vitæ mea.*"

The house stood close to the corner of the present railway bridge on the Church Street side of the churchyard, opposite the entrance to the grounds of Pipe Hall Hotel. This building remained until 1820, when the necessity for a new parsonage more in accordance with modern requirements forced itself upon the attention of the inhabitants. At a Vestry Meeting held August 14th 1820, "it was resolved that it was highly desirable to take down the present parsonage house and premises, and to borrow

such sums of money as may be necessary to defray the expences, after deducting the value of the materials, in pursuance of an Act of Parliament for that purpose passed in the reign of his late Majesty. Resolved, unanimously, that the Rev. Wm. Leigh be requested to prepare plans of the parsonage house and necessary outbuildings, and an estimate of the expenses of the same; and to lay the same together with the value of the materials and all other necessary particulars before a Vestry Meeting to be held on Friday, 22nd of Sept."

At the latter Vestry Meeting it was resolved that this meeting agrees that the present site is a most ineligible spot for a new parsonage house, and that the Churchwardens are hereby directed to purchase from Mr. Dovey Hawkesford, a piece of land adjoining the present Chapelyard, containing by admeasurement 970 square yards for the sum of £375, for a site for the new parsonage. Here the present vicarage was erected.

The parish bounds seem to have been regularly perambulated, sometimes by the Curate and the inhabitants by themselves, and sometimes by the Wolverhampton Clergy. The procession was a very solemn and imposing one, commencing with service, but ending with song, for before starting the processioners headed by a man with a large banner* heard the gospel read and a short homily delivered on the sin of removing the landmarks, and at the end of the perambulation, the principal inhabitants adjourned to an Inn where they made merry at the parish expence. The following entries in the Chapelwardens' accounts refer to this custom.

1691.	Ye charge for ye procession - - -	0	19	6
1705.	Pd. for ye processioners for refreshmts and ale - - - - - -	0	8	9

* In one of Skelton's Merry Tales the poet says to the Cobler: "Neybour, you be a tall man, and in the King's warrs you must be a standard."

Cobler: "Standard! what a thing is that."

Poet: "It is a great banner, such a one as thou doost use to beare in Rogacyon Weeke."

1706.	For a treat at ye perambulation and ale for ye same - - - - -	0	9	11
1725.	This year May 2. Ye Wolverhampton Clergy in their perambulation came to Bilston and ye out-bounds. They were treated at ye Widº Stone's house: ye charge whereof which was charged to John Shale's a/c was - - -	0	8	0
1732.	May 16. For ye processioners treat -	0	13	6

The custom was kept up until 1827, when it was discontinued.

Until the end of the last century the Chapelyard was surrounded only by a hedge, the keeping of which in repair formed an annual item of expenditure in the Churchwardens' accounts.

"1706.	Fra: Hadley for mending ye Chapellyard hedge and trouce - - - - -	0	3	6
1711.	For mending ye Chapelyard hedge - -	0	2	6
1714.	,, ,, ,, - -	0	2	6
1719.	,, crying ye Chapellyard hedge - -	0	0	2
1723.	,, making ye Chapellyard hedge and for thorns - - - - -	0	3	9"

These items regularly appear. A custom not altogether fallen into disuetude was religiously observed in the last century, viz: the decorating of the Chapel at the great Church festivals. The following entries speak for themselves.

"1692.	For dressing ye Chapell at Whitsuntide -	0	1	0
1694.	Ann Knowles for dressing and sweeping ye Chapell - - - - -	0	2	9
1696.	For sweeping and dressing ye Chapell wt hollies - - - - -	0	1	6
1697.	For birch to dress ye Chapell at Whitsuntide	0	0	6
1700.	For dressing ye Chapell with hollies and ivy	0	0	6
1713.	For dressing ye Chapell - - - -	0	0	6
1715.	,, ,, ,, ,, at Christmas -	0	0	3
1718.	,, ,, ,, ,, twice - - -	0	1	0"

In the year 1669 the town was visited by a company of the trained band, who came here on information that several Catholic inhabitants were acquainted with, if not concerned in, some plot

against the Sovereign. The following charges were entered in the accounts for that year.

		s.	d.
"1669.	For fetching ye Armes - - -	00	02 08
	Pd. Jon Parkes for dressinge them -	00	03 06
	Pd. the trayne men for 4 dayes - -	00	16 00
	,, for Powther - - - - -	00	00 06
	,, the Muster Master - - -	00	03 00
	,, for carryinge theyr Armes - -	00	02 00
	,, for theyre Coullers - - -	00	02 09
1689.	Charges about a souldier - - - -	0	4 0
	,, of 4 souldiers - - - -	0	0 10
	For 3 loades of coales for ye watch - -	0	1 5
	When ye Militia went in to Wolverhampton	0	14 6
	For 4 loades of coales more - - -	0	1 11"

Bilston received another visit from these soldiers in the year 1690, when the country was somewhat disturbed by adherents of the Stuarts.

The entry on this occasion was as follows:—

The charge abt ye Train Souldiers, July ye 11th 1690.

For Jon Griffin's coatt and ye makeing £1/2/8 and for repaire of hose 1/6 - -	1	4	2
For his hat 2/2, for a hat band and colours 2/- -	0	4	2
Their pay two dayes and their powther 13/6 takeing them in 2/- in all - -	0	15	6
For two cravatts for Ric: Allon - - - -	0	2	4

In the same account for that year we have,

"Four daies pay to Jon Mousall, Jon Dudley, and Ric: Allon, train soldiers - -	1	8	4
For colours for them at Stafford - - -	0	4	9
To ye Train soldiers half a pound of gun powther	0	0	6"

Gunpowder Plot appears to have been commemorated every year by the ringing of bells, and lighting of bonfires, the expenses of which are duly entered in the Chapelwardens' accounts, as follows:

1668.	To ye Ringers 5th of Novem: - - -	0	0	6
1690.	Spent at Mrs. Taylor's 3/6 and ye same day (Nov. 5) to ye Ringers 3/- -	0	6	6
1691.	For ringing and a bonfire on ye 5th of November - - - - -	0	3	0
1693.	The Ringers Nov. 5th 2/6, for a load of coales yn 6d. - - - -	0	3	0
1697.	Nov. ye 5th For Ringing 2/6, and for coales 6d. toto - - - -	0	3	0
1698.	Ringing and coles for Gunpowder Treason day - - - -	0	3	0
1707.	To ye Ringers ye 5th Nov. 2/6, for a load of coales then 6d. - - - -	0	3	0
1715.	Nov. 5. For ringers 2/6 and for a load of coales 7d. yt is - - - -	0	3	1

The methods adopted by the Chapelwardens for the settling of each year's accounts are singularly primitive and curious, and the memoranda I am about to quote, throw much light upon the parochial management of the time. In the accounts for 1670 we have this memo:—

"The Constable haveing accounted with ye Towne for five leawnes (levies) for ye Townes use and towards payinge ye Militia fell to bee 9/8 in ye Townes debt, whereof Mr. Robbin's received 4/8, wch made the Towne meet with him, uppon all accounts; and payd ye other 5/8 to Henery Powell towards payinge ye poore. Soe that hee is even wth ye Towne uppon his accounts."

"1697.	For ale when ye neighbours met Matt: Lees abt ye repairs of ye street -	0	1	0
1700.	Spent in ale att ye takinge up these accounts	0	3	0
1701.	For ale abt settling ye levies - -	0	2	3
1702.	For 3 bottles of cyder att giving up ot first accounts - - - -	0	1	6
1704.	Ye 29th May, Ric: Norgrove paid to George Perry ye 3/10d. (he owed) so yt George Perry is payd in full and R. Norgrove had in his hands 1s/0½d wch was spent in *ale and tobacco*, so yt R. Norgrove also is even wt ye Towne.			

1707.	Spent att ye taking up of ye last Constable's accounts in nutts and ale	0	2	6
1712.	Att ye time Tho: Stokes answered ye 4s/3d in his hands to ye Townes use thus:—To Rich: Hawkesford for one strike of oates wch Jos: Parker had abt catching ye sparrows 1/6, and to Rich: Hawkesford wo pd for 6 dozen of sparrow's Heads*1/- and for a candle att giveing up these Accts. ½d. and for ale and tobacco 1/8½. So yt by these accts. he is even wth ye Towne.			
1713.	Att which time he (the overseer) pd for ale and tobacco 2/6, and he had payd to Wm Davies ye p'sent overseer of ye poore 31/- before.			
1714.	These accts. were p'used by ye Inhabitants and allow'd, but ye inhabitants say ye mole-catcher is overpayd 20/-*			
1717.	For a boy to call ye neighbours 1d. and for a candle ¼d. - - - - -	0	0	1¼
1718.	Att wch time he (the Constable) pd 3d. for a quart of ale, and ½d. for a candle by which he made meet with ye Towne.			

This was a pleasant if not very dignified method of balancing parochial accounts, and certainly it must have been a novel sight to see the "city fathers" smoking their "long clays" and drinking *toties* out of tots (Bilstonese for cups), while they discussed the decoration of the beadle's coat, or the dogwhipper's salary, with all the gravity of a council of war. This method of liquidating the annual balance did one thing; it encouraged good fellowship, for we have no account of party bickerings during the two centuries the plan was in operation.

Another custom scrupulously observed was the celebration of the restoration of Charles II, a good custom in itself, but

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* Reference to sparrow, hedgehog, and mole-catching will be found on a subsequent page.

commemorating the escape of one of the most immoral, cowardly, and ungrateful wretches, that ever held a regal sceptre, which is saying a great deal. That he was cowardly, witness the manner in which he secreted himself at the risk of sacrificing lives far more valuable than his own, instead of facing fate nobly, like hundreds of his gallant adherents; that he was a monster of ingratitude witness his neglect of many of his preservers, who sacrificed so much for him, and died unrewarded. The romance of the escapade no doubt was responsible for the vitality of the celebration, for monarchs are not hunted every day. The Churchwardens' accounts do not go further back than 1668, but in that year we have this entry:—

1668.	For ringing May 29th - - - -	0	2	0
1688.	,, ,, ,, ,, - - - -	0	2	6
1699.	May 29. To ye ringers given - - -	0	2	6
1706.	May 29. To ye ringers as usual 2/6, for a bonfire then 6d. in all - - -	0	3	0
1708.	To Francis Beebee for ale drunk May 29th	0	2	6
1714.	For ringing 29th May, 2/6, for coals 5/7, and for gunpowder 1/- - - -	0	9	1

A branch of the famous family of Penderills—the preservers of Charles II,—either lived here at the time of the Restoration, or came here soon after, as the following extracts from the Registers show :—

"1728.	Paid to Charles Pendrill - - - -	0	2	6
1729.	Jany. 2nd John Pendrill, a weaver, Roman Cath: put in ye ground* affidavit, recd 7d.; poore.			
1730.	Baptised William Pendrill, son of Charles, recd 10d.			
1754.	,, July 27. Charles, son of Richd and Mary Pendrill.			
1756.	,, June 6. Edwd son of Richard and Mary Pendrill.			
1761.	,, June 25. John, son of Richd and Mary Pendrill.			
1764.	,, Fanny, daughter of Richd and Mary Pendrill."			

Another of the Boscobel heroes had some connection with

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* This affidavit certified that he was buried in woollen as the Act of Parliament required.

Bilston. The family of Carless, descendants of Col. Carless, who was hidden in the Royal Oak with the King, came to reside here. Here are some extracts to prove this.

"The accounts of Mr. Edward Carless, Mr. Richard Carless, and Mr. Thos Pratchett, who served the office of Chapelwardens of Bilston, for the years 1753, 1754, and 1755 here follow:—

N.B.—The two Mr. Carlesses died in the time of serving the said office. [The family originally came from Harborne]. The following are baptismal entries from the Registers.

1747. Elizabeth, daughter of Joseph and Anne Carless.
1749. James, ye son of Edwd and Sarah Carless.
1752. Thomas, ye son of Edwd Carless, Gent., of ye family of ye Carless's, of Corbyn's Hall, and Eliz. his wife, daughter of Tho: Tomkys, Esq.
1753. Wm ye son of Edwd Carless, Gent., and Elizabeth.
1769. Hannah, ye daughter of Edward and Mary Carless.

Marriages :—

1752. Jany. 12. On the 16th of April, James Pratchett, clerk, Curate of Adderley in Shropshire, and Mrs. Mary Carless, of Bilston, daughter of ye late Joseph Carless, of Corbyn's Hall, Esqre, were married by me in Wolverhampton Church, under a license from Mr. Craddock. Ed: Best, Minister, (of Bilston).

Burial. Inscription in Church. On a brass plate on the south wall of the interior of the building is the following inscription. "Richard, the son of Joseph Carless, Esq., of Corbyn's Hall, died May 20, 1755, Aged 40, and was buried near this place."

Surmounting this inscription is a heraldic coat of arms—"An oak tree proper; on a fesse three crowns. For a crest a helmet, surmounted by a laurel crown pierced saltier-wise by a sword and sceptre." This coat is the one granted to Col. Carless for his loyalty and devotion to the King, after the Battle of Worcester.

The ridiculous massacre of moles, hedgehogs, sparrows, &c. at the expense of the parish, which was so persistently carried out

in the 17th and 18th centuries in the agricultural districts, under the ignorant belief that these creatures of the good Creator's wisdom were pests to the farmer, is abundantly apparent in the Churchwardens' accounts of Bilston. I quote a few entries to bear this out.

		£	s.	d.
1694.	Paid for an urchin (hedgehog) to Mr. Robbins	0	0	2
1693.	To Joseph Callow, the mole-catcher -	1	1	0
1694.	,, ,, ,, the mole-catcher -	1	0	0
1691.	To 6½ dozen sparrows' heads - - -	0	5	3
1696.	Sparrow money 5/- for oates 2/- - -	0	7	0
1699.	To Jon Hawkesford for sparrow money -	0	7	6
1699.	For two urchins - - - - - -	0	0	4
1701.	The money for catching sparrows and for oates - - - - - -	0	7	6
1702.	To Jos: Callow, ye mole-catcher 5/- and to Jos: Callow more - 5/-	0	10	0
1705.	Pd. for sand and to Jos: Parker for catching sparrows and a strike of oates in all	2	0	4
1708.	To Jos: Callow more towards his mole catching allowance - - -	0	3	6
1708.	For a strike of oates about catching sparrows - - - - -	0	1	6
1710.	For 16 dozen sparrows' heads 2/8 and for oates 10d. - - - - -	0	3	6
1711.	To Jos: Parker, ye clerk, for catching birds	0	1	3
1712.	To ye mole catcher att sev'rall times for 55 dozen and 9 moles, att 9d p. dozen, Jos: Callow - - - - -	2	1	9

And so these entries continue down till 1820.

Bilston possessed an official dog-whipper, whose duty it was to whip dogs out of Church and keep the children quiet. We have the following references to this important parochial officer.

"1706.	To Jon Moseley, for keeping ye doggs out of ye Chapell, &c. - - -	0	5	0
1709.	For a whipp lash for Jon Moseley - -	0	0	3
1709.	To Jon Moseley, dog whipper - - -	0	5	0
1713.	Pd. Jon Moseley, for dogwhipping - -	0	5	0
1715.	To Jon Moseley, for a whipp lash - -	0	0	3"

I conclude this chapter with a few miscellaneous items. The first is a singular agreement.—

"1702. Dec. ye 29. Memorand: Yt wee Abraham Jones and Richard Durke, of Birmingham, (Paviers) have now in hande had and received of Edwd Homer, Constable of Bilston, in the behalfe of ye inhabitants of Bilston, ye sume of Five and thirty shillings in full satisfaction for paveing the causeway of Bilston, and in full discharge of all dues, reckonings, debts, and demands and accompts whatsoever, from *ye beginning of ye world to ye day of ye date hereof.* Witnesse our handes.

Ye marke of
Abraham Jones, pavier.
Ye marke of
Richard Durke, pavier."

Goddard's Bridge. This bridge which spans the brook in Oxford Street, is a very ancient one. As early as 1670 we have the following account of its repair.

"For ye mending of ye bridge:—

For 7 plankes 11 feete long, 2 inches and a halfe at 2/4 a piece, and three sleepers att 3/- a piece, wth five poales, and two or three waste, yt I reckon not - -	1	5	4
Pd. carpenters 2/6, to ye masons 2/8, for lime and sand 1/-, in ale 8d. for ye workmen and Mr. Hoo's man, and to Jos: Taylor for helping then 4d. - - -	0	6	2

1689. "Ye charges abt Goddard's Bridge.

For one cart load of lime and 3 horse loades -	0	9	0
For six loades of stones 5/- and 2 loades of sand 2/-	0	7	0
To Jon Ryley 11/6, and to Jon Aspley 3/6 - -	0	15	0
For ale 2/6, and for 3 pieces of timber 4/- - -	0	6	6
For six loades of stones to Tho: Perry - -	0	8	6
To Jon Ryley more 5/-, to Will: Shale for carriage 8/9	0	13	9
For a chaine 16lbs. weight and 2 horse lockes -	0	5	1
For more stone to Tho: Perry - - - -	0	11	0
Tho: Colburne for a daies' work 9d. and for ale 6d.	0	1	3
For stone for ye bridge before itt fell - - -	0	1	6
Tho: Price £2, to Will: Shale for 4 loades of stone 6/- - - - - -	2	6	0"

In an old deed dated 1479, mention is made of Goddard's broke and Goddard's Croft Meadow within ye Lordship of Bradley. To this deed Thomas Pipe and Thomas Greene, of Bilston, are witnesses.

"1693.	For shovelling ye snow off Goddard's Bridge	0	0	6
1708.	To Ben Pearson for 2 daies' work att Goddard's Bridge and ye foot causeway	0	1	3"

When Goddard's Bridge became corrupted to Gozzard Bridge and Gozzard Street, I know not, except that it occurred within the present century.

In the Chapelwardens' accounts for the year 1690, there appears an item which shows that either King William himself, or some of his immediate courtiers were at Wolverhampton.

"For horse hire twice to Wolverhampton upon ye account of ye King's carriages."

This is the account in which the items (already quoted) about the train band occur.

Among other items duly entered in the Churchwardens' accts. are the following:—

"1691.	For ringing upon ye news of ye surrender of Limerick - - - - - -	0	2	6
	For a bonefire for ye King's return from beyond sea - - -	0	1	0
$169\frac{2}{3}$.	For ringing on ye 22 and 25th of May, on ye occasion of ye victory obtain'd by our fleet at sea, and bonefires in all	0	4	0
$169\frac{6}{6}$.	For a mittamus for a cock-stealer and takeing him to ye House of Correction	0	2	7
	Paid for taking ye Cock-stealer to Walsall	0	1	8
1697.	For ye instructions concerning ye Blessed Trinity - - - - - - -	0	1	0
	[does this refer to some alteration of the Prayer Book?]			
1697.	For setting up a paire of butts - -	0	5	0
	For repairing ye butts - - - -	0	3	0

These last are very curious entries, coming so late as 1697. Every parish was anciently compelled to provide butts for archery, but archery had long ceased to be enforced at the time to which these entries refer.

In the survey of the township in 1771, I find some land called "The Four Wall Butts," whether this be the site of the "butts" thus "set up" I cannot say.

"1708.	On ye Thanksgiving day, for ye Victory of Ramellies to ye Ringers 2/6, for a bonefire and powder 1/-, and spent yt day 6d. yt is - - - - -	0	4	0
1707.	To ye ringers for ye Union of England and Scotland - - - - -	0	3	8
1714.	For ringing for Dr. Sacheverill - -	0	2	6"

"1723. Nov. 15. Memorand: That ye under written John Parker dothe hereby promise to repaire, maintaine and keep in good order ye Chapell clock for ye space of ten yeares, in consideration of seaven shillings to him in hand pd by ye p'sent Chapellwarden, Rich. Taylor; and in further consideration of halfe a crown p. annum to be payd unto him yearley upon ye 24th of June, each yeare by ye Chapelwardens for ye time being.

Ye marke of
Witnesse John Parker."
Ric: Ames.

"1716. For carrying snow out of ye Chapell - 0 0 9"

The following instances of Church discipline are very curious:—

"8th Feby. 1718. Sarah Poole, of Wednesfield, did pennance in Bilston Chapell, for ye crime of fornication wt Tho: Onions, by virtue of a schedule of pennance from Mr. Hillman, official."

"Dec. 3, 1727. Elizabeth Shaw of this town (by virtue of a process out of Wolverhampton Court from Mr. Craddock, official and E. Short, Registrar), was denounc'd excommunicate for contumacy in not appearing, &c. I doubt she is a very vitious woman, she haveing had two bastards."

"Nov. 24. 1728. I denounced ye sentence of excommunication against Ann Turton, spinstr, for ye crime of fornication and not doing penance. Note. She is a Dissentr of ye Presbyterian persuasion."

"30 March 1729. Hannah Preston, of ye p'rish of Wolverhampton, did penance for ye crime of fornication with one Thomas Nicholls, by virtue of a schedule of pennance directed to ye Rev. Mr. Craddock, Official of Wolverhampton."

It is not stated what the character of the penance was, but she had to appear in the face of the congregation shrouded in white, and was admonished by the minister not to sin any more.

"May 4, 1759. At a Vestry Meeting, it was agreed, that James Fellows shall be employed to keep due order with regard to children and other disorderly persons during divine service, at a salary of 5/- per quarter, and be clothed every two years with a new silver-laced hat, wig, and coat, waistcoat, breeches, stockings and hose, and be employed as public cryer to ye town, provided he performs his duties satisfactorily."

What degenerate people we must have become! the beadle's glory has departed, and visions of new silver-laced hat, and eke breeches and hose, no longer disturb his mental equilibrium; nor are the eyes of the prosy parishioners gladdened by the sight of the gorgeously dressed crier, telling his wondrous stories to the admiring crowd of children of all ages.

In the year 1770, the following were the principal land owners in the township, as taken from the levy books of that year.

OWNERS.	ACRES.	ROODS.	POLES.
Robt Barber	164	3	14
Ambrose Tibbatts	13	3	36
Richd Hawkesford	36	0	19
Thos Tomkys, Esq.	310	2	12
Robyns and Crutchley	223	1	2
Lord Gower	4	1	37
John Bickley	111	3	29
Thomas Hoo, Esqre	208	1	19
John Wilkinson	23	0	6
Willis Kempson	78	3	26
Thomas Green	35	1	6
Rev. Edward Best	25	0	8
John Stone	54	0	34
Alexr Perry	40	0	12"

In 1776 the road leading from Bilston to Wednesbury was commenced, under the provisions of an Act of Parliament, in order to shorten the distance between the two towns—the old road previous to this going through Darlaston. The work, which occupied nearly two years, was done mostly by pauper labour, the wages being rated at 1s. 4d. per day.

In 1772, and again in 1773, the township was surveyed by Edward Worsey.

In 1776, the amount raised by Assessment was £544 11 0

Medium for 3 years, 1785 being ye last - £645 16 0

Nett money paid annually to ye poor - - £606 3 10

In 1774, the Rev. Edward Best resigned the Curacy having held it for nearly 38 years.

"In 1774. A Vestry Meeting was held to consider what should be done with the money left by Mrs. Mary Swinnerton to the poor, at which it was unanimously agreed that a certain quantity of land, late the property of Brooke Crutchley, Esqre and his two daughters, Catherine and Anne Crutchley, and Mrs. Jane Robins, called the Churchyard piece, near the present Chapelyard be purchased by ye Chapellwardens for an additional burial ground, and that the residue of the money over and above the £20 left by Mrs. Swinnerton towards purchasing the ground, should be raised and defrayed by levy."

In 1792, a dispute arose between the Inhabitants and the Rev. John Best, Curate, because he being non-resident, and Vicar of Sedgley, did neglect his ministerial duties. The dispute was long, lasting for nearly two years (during which Mr. Best refused several offers of settlement), but it was finally settled by the appointment of the Rev. W. Leigh, as Curate-in-charge. The difficulties of non-residency are shown in the following entry.

"July 15, 1789. Paid to Wm. Moseley for hunting ye country for a Clergyman to preach ye charity sermon - 2 0

The extracts given in this chapter will enable our readers to form some idea of the life of our ancestors, a century and a half ago. *Tempora mutantur.*

CHAPTER XVI.

Some Notes on the Ancient Families of Bilston.

THE following notes of some of the most ancient families who have lived in the town, though not scientifically arranged to suit the fastidious taste of the exact genealogist, will be found interesting by the class of readers for whom they are mostly intended. They have been gathered from various reliable sources, and, in most cases, a fairly complete genealogical succession can be readily compiled from them by such of our readers as care to follow up this branch of historical antiquities. When a complete succession cannot be made out, the curious reader may do, as more than one clever but unscrupulous genealogist has done, fill it in to suit his own taste or prejudiced inclinations.

"The Families of De Bilston and Moseley."

We have purposely united the families whose names head this notice because of their intimate connection both by friendship and by marriage, while most of the latter information respecting them is so mixed together, as to leave the historian no choice in the matter.

It has been supposed—but upon what grounds we are not able to state—that the Bilstons were an ancient Saxon family. The time of their settlement here, and the cause which influenced their receiving the name of "de Bilston," are alike uncertain. In the early part of the 12th century, however, we find them residing here, as is proved by an old deed made by Wulfric de Bilston, to Walter, his son, in which deed he grants to the said Walter "all

his lands, &c., in Bylstone, Bradlye, Wylnall, Moseleye, and Byshburie, and to his heirs for ever." This Walter was lord of the Manor of Bradleye in the 10th year of Henry I., which he held by the customary service of Knight's fees, (i.e., by a military tenure). The next person of this name of whom we have any account was John de Bilston, Kt., who, as we have spoken of previously, fought under the banner of Prince Edward, at the battle of Evesham, in the 49th of Henry III., for which he was rewarded with the manor of Stowheath.

In the Pleas of the Forest of Kinver for the year 1271, we find that Robert de Haggele (Hagley) was fined a mark by the pledge of Walter de Deneys, of Amblecote, and John de Bilston. In the Banco Roll, Ist Edward I, (1272) Pleas at Westminster, Nichola the Widow of Robert de Essington sued John de Billeston for a third of six acres of land at Molleston, (Moseley) and eight other tenants in the same Ville for a third of their lands as her dower. The defendants appeared and stated that Robert her husband was not in seisin of the tenement in question as of fee when he married her, nor at any other time. A Jury was to be summoned in the Octaves of March following to try the case.

Mr. Ames also says "There was in Darlaston Rough, a Grange (i.e. either a barn or Farm house with barnes) and itt was sold by Tho: de Monshul to Walter, a chyrurgeon of Wolverhampton. Among ye witnesses is Geoffrey de Bilston, and John, Lord of Bradeley."

He, the above John, was buried in the Church of the Grey Friars, London, in the 42nd year of Edward I. The next was Geoffrey de Bilston, who was witness to a document, dated at Walshale, 20th Edward I., being a grant from Thomas de Darlastone, to William, son of Ade Trumwyn, and Nycolas, son of Richard Fitz Osbert, of Wylnale.

Mr. Ames informs us that "it does appeare by two old deeds, in the custody of Edward Perry de Corner, writ abt ye time of Edward II, that there were Bilstons of Bilston, and the tradition ran that one of ye family of the Moseley, married ye heiress of ye family of ye Bilstons."

A noted member of this family was John de Bilston, who served in France as a soldier under Edward III. He received a charter from Edward III. for his bravery, which was dated the 20th year of his reign, and ran as follows:—"Edwardus rex, die gratia, rex Angli et France, &c., &c. Know ye, that I command by my kingly authority, that the lands of John de Billestune, situate at Billestune and elsewhere, be free and quiet from shires and hundreds, and all other customs of earthly servitude, as was held by our fathers, freely to the said John, for the services which he hath rendered to us in France. This I command on my forfeiture." This John left one son John, and two daughters named Margaret and Joan. The former was married to Peter Warboys, Merchant, of London, and Joan to John de Grenhull. He also appears to have had a brother, for by a deed belonging to Mr. Robyns, of Bilston, (writes Mr. Ames,) dated 4th of Henry 5th, Clement ye son of Adam de Bilston, granted Monmere brushe to Will: Robyns.

John, surnamed Juvenis de Bilston, was succeeded in the estates by Edwin de Bilston, while a younger son named Thomas went to London and commenced business as a Mercer, and became very rich. Stow in his Survey tells us that "Thomas Billsinton founded a chantry in the parish Church of St. Botolph in 1404, and gave to the said Church a house in Cornhill for the priest to live in." He died in 1436, and was buried in the Chantry which he had founded.

Edwin de Bilston married Julian, daughter of Thomas de Darlaston, and by this union had three daughters; the eldest of whom, being (in default of male issue) heiress married John Mollesley, who had a release from Robert, lord of Essington, of all manner of service due to him for his lands in Moseley. This John de Mollesley was one of the principal landowners in Bilston, and his name appears first in the list of those who surrendered their lands in 1458, situate in Windmill field, to Sir Thos. de Erdington, for the use of the curate or priest of Bilston. He deceased in 1485, leaving one son John Mollesley de Bilston, who married Margaret, daughter and heir of Thomas Blithe, by whom he had issue, a son and daughter.

In the Visitation of Staffordshire for 1663, we have the following pedigree of the Moseleys given.

Will'mus Moseley married Johanna, filia Rogeri Hillary, de Bilston et Moseley militis.

Joh'ns Molesley de Moseley = Christiana, filia et heres Rob'ti Costif et Catarinæ uxoris ejus, sororis Adami de Peshall, militis.

Rogerus Molesley de Bylston = Agnes, filia Joh'is Bate de Longden.

Johannes Molesley de Bilston = Margareta, filia et hæres Tho: Blithe, Argent, on a fesse sable three escallops or

Will'mus de Bylson = Isabella, filia Will'i Harecourt.

Cornelius Moseley de Bylston, in p'ochia de Wolverhampton. = Alionora, filia Rob'ti Spicheley in com Wigorn.

Rob'tus Molesley de Bilston aº 1583. = Audrea, filia Willi Wyrley de Hampstead, and Elizabetha uxor Rechall Tolle de Toll in com: Staff:

Will'mus Moseley, of Bilston, Aglat 23, 1583. = Lucretia, dau: of Thomas Whitgreave, of Bridgford, Staff:

Thomas Moseley, of Moseley died aº 1659, of Molesley and Bilston, Esq. = Mary, dau: of Ralph Floyer, of Hints Co: Staff:

Robt. Moseley = Bridget and Audrey.

Robert Thomas Walter = 1 Mary 2 Jane

John Moseley, of Moseley 60 Staff: aged 30 ann. 10 April, 1663. = Eleanor, dau: of Richard Whitgreave, of Whitgreave.

Shaw says the ancient burial place of the de Bilstons was in the Chancel of Our Lady at Wolverhampton, but the vault being disturbed by alterations, their descendants, the Mollesleys were buried in Leveson's Chantry.

Of the latter family Huntbach says:—

In Leveson's Chantry, near the midst thereof is an alabaster gravestone, whereon is drawn the effigies of a man and woman in blacklines, and about them this inscription "Here lyeth the bodyes of Robert Moseley, of Bilston, Esq., and Audrye his wife; wch Robert departed this life the 16th day of September, in the year of our Lord God 1595. Audreye, the wife of Robert."

Over their heads an escutcheon with this coat of arms.

Quarterly. 1 Sable. A Chevron between 3 millpecks. Argent. (Moseley).
4 Argent—On a fess sable, 3 escallops, Or (Blythe).
(Blyth) empaling.
Arg—3 hunters' horns stringed—sable—Wyrley.
Arg—2 lions passant 1 and 3 sable, 2 and 4 white.
'Mos legem regit' (Bilston).

In the north wall, also, is fixed a monument to the memory of Mrs. Margaret Moseley, her effigy being cut in alabaster, in a praying posture, having a book lying on a desk before her, and under her monument this inscription and epitaph:—

"To the noble and worthy matron Margaret Moseley, second daughter of Sir Clement Higham, Kt., wife of Humphrey Moseley, Esq., whom after she had enriched with five sons and three daughters, she departed in peace, and after long widowhood followed to glory, full of virtue, full of years. Rd. Moseley, her son, erected this monument."

"Under this stone a pearl is hid. What then?
Search not; this pearl is God's, and not for men.
A living pearl she was, whose lustre bright,
Yielded all her's, a long and sweet delight.
Noble by birth, by virtue more indeed,
More fruitful than she was in fruitful seed.
More fuller than of years, she was of grace,
And more of glory than of grace she was."
Obit. 19, Dec. Anno dom. 1608, ætatis, 78.

On the top of the monument was an escutcheon, with these arms.—

Arg—A Chevron sable between 3 Millpecks—Arg—(Moseley)
Arg—A Chevron sable charged with 3 escallops of the first.
Sable—A Chevron between 3 Millpecks.
Arg—A Chevron sable charged with 3 escallops of the first impaling.
Arg—A fess counter componé—Or—and sable between 3 nags' heads erased gules. (Higham)
Gules a Chevron engrailed between 3 falcons volent Arg—Armed Or.
Arg—A fess counter componé as before.
Gules as before.
Arg—A fess counter componé—as before.

It is to be noted that the motto of the Bilston family which was subsequently adopted by the Moseleys was *Mos legem regit* ("Custom rules the law") and curiously enough it became a punning motto on the name of Moseley which family adopted it, thus Mos = ley. It is still borne by Sir Oswald Mosley, of Rolleston Hall, though upon what ground we are not able to state.

The residence of this Family in Bilston was the old half timbered house in High Street, now known as "The Greyhound Inn," a building of early Tudor architecture, dating from the latter end of the 15th century. When the Commissioners of Henry VIII came to Bilston to enquire into the state of St. Leonard's Church, they stayed at this house. The house was sold during the Civil War to John Green, Gent, whose son was a Captain of Cavalry in

the Royal Army, and fought in the battle of Worcester, in which he was slain.

The Bovebroke Family.

The Bovebroke, Boverock or Bovereaux family was of Norman extraction and came to England either with William the Conqueror or soon after the Conquest. They are known to have settled here early in the 12th Century. The first mention we find of them occurs in a deed dated 10th die Kalend Aprilis 1109, "wherein Nycolas Bovebroke, de Bilston gave to Roger de Wylnale a parcel of land with its appurtenances, situate in Bilston, and called Bovebroke Field, for which grant the said Roger gave for a heriot 10 shillings, and for fines, siesin, and fee, 10 shillings."

Mr. Ames tells us that there was a tradition that the family of the Boverocks had a house in Tho: Linton's grounds, which is so called in Bradeley Lordship. And by an old deed it appeared that Roger de Bovebroke lived in the Lordship of Bradley and sold one half of a mill in Bilston to Adam Bate. To this deed of very ancient date one of the Hoos (Robert) is a witness.

Nicholas Bovebroke above mentioned had a sister Alicia who was married to the Lord of the Manor of Cannock. In 1254, there was a Robert Bovebroke who had possession of lands in Bilston, Bradley and Willenhall. He had a son Roger who fought with Walter de Bilston at the battle of Evesham. In 1304, Ralph Bovebroke married a Maude de Bilston, by which union there were issue two sons. The eldest, John, was steward to the Lord of the Manor in the time of Richard II, but the younger died in his father's lifetime. In 1423 a Roger Bovebroke was witness to a deed made at Bradley in the 1st Henry VI.

Mr. Ames says:—"I have seen a deed, in which John Rogers de Bradley, Thomas Attee Hoo de eadem, and Roger Bovebroke are all witnesses:" and again:—"In a deed marked 296, mention is made to a certain parcel of meadow land in 'fedo de Bradley in quodum campo voc,' in Bovebroke field:" and once again he says:—"I conceive that ye Bovebrokes removed to Shareshill, for I finde yt Roger Bovebroke (de Shareshulle) made

a ffeofment of land in Bradeley to Ric: Lowe del hyde, Will: Pinson, &c. Ye deed from which I gather this is dated 28ö Hen: 6ti 1450." This, however, is incorrect, for it appears that in 1494, 9th of Henry VII, John Bovebroke de Bilston was witness to a deed, wherein Thomas Perrye granted St. Leonard's Hill for the use of St. Leonard's Chapel, at Bilston, for ever, but that leaving a short time afterwards, and going to Shareshill, his name was erased and that of Richard Kempson substituted. After the year 1500, there is no trace left whatever of them, and it is very probable that the family then became extinct. Their coat of arms, originally existing in St. Leonard's Church, was partially destroyed by the robbers when they broke into the Church, what remained being as follows:—

"4—A Chevron between 3 eagles, argent. (Bovebroke)
(Sapiens qui assiduus.)"

"Tomkys Family."

The first of this family, of whom we have any knowledge, was Rogeri Tomkys, who was prebendary of Featherstone in the 48th year of Henry III. The next was William Tomkys, who in 1340, was grantee of a deed, wherein all the lands, tenements, &c., in Wolverhampton and Bilston, of Thomas Mollesley, were given to John Mollesley Tomkys, for the consideration of 20 marks, to his heirs for ever; he agreeing to give for a heriot 1 plough, and for fine, seizin, &c., 10 shillings.

The above-named William had married Felicia, daughter of the said Thomas Mollesley, by which union they had three children, viz:—William, John, and Mary who died young. William succeeded to his father's estates, and John to those of Thomas Mollesley. In 1382, William Tomkys died, leaving no children, and John came into possession. He married Julian Leveson, of Willenhall. In a deed granted by this John to his son, in 1427, mention is made of a portion of land at Wednesfield, called Lechmore Meadow, which he held by customary tenure of the Lord of the Manor. Lechmore Meadow was sold in the 22nd of Richard II by Wm. Hampton, of Essington, to Thomas Geffreys, of Bilston, the purchase money being 40 shillings. We have no

record when it came again into the Tomkys family, but in the year 1700 it was held by Isaac Tomkys. Richard, the son of John, married Alice, daughter of John Perry. This Richard was one of the landowners who surrendered land in Windmill field to Sir Thomas de Erdington, in the 36th year of Edward IV. He was buried, like his ancestors in Wolverhampton Church. In Huntsbach's MSS., we have the following reference to him:—

"In the south aisle of Wolverhampton Church is a blue marble stone, whereon have been plates of brass, on which were the portraitures of a man and woman, but which are now torn away, and also the plate whereon was this inscription:—

"Here lyeth withouten miss,
The bodyes of Richard Tomkys and his wife Alice,
Wch Richard on June ye 2nd day
Towards heaven took his way,
In the year 1501.
His bodye and bones be laid under this stone,
Whose soul, sweet Jesus, have mercy upon. ætis 66."

His son William was one of the trustees appointed by his uncle, Thomas Perry, to keep in trust the piece of land, called St. Leonard's Hill, &c. The deed was signed by

William Tomkys, William Moseley,
Richard Kempson and Nycolas Robyns.

His brother Robert went to live at Neachill's Hall, Wednesfield, of which he had become owner by his father's will.

A brother of the above mentioned Richard, was according to Mr. Ames, minister of Quatt in Shropshire, in the 23rd of Henry VII, a piece of information which he tells us "he gathered from a release to him made and dated *apud Quatt in domo habitationis Dom. Tho: Tuncks Capellani.*"

There was also in the time of Queen Elizabeth, one John Tomkys, a minister at Shrewsbury. "He," says Mr. Ames, "preach'd before ye Earle of Leicester att Shrewsbury (on Eph. 5, 1, 2) May ye 26, 1584. I have seen his sermon in print. He also publish'd *a Briefe Exposition of the Lord's Prayer.* A Dom. 1585. This John Tomkys I take to be the son of Ric: Tomkys, of Bilston, and father of Isaac."

There was also a John Tomkys, third son of John Tomkys, of Bilston, who was educated at New Inn Hall, Oxford, and took his degrees. He became vicar of Snitterfield, in Warwickshire, where he died, being buried in the Chancel of his Church, June 19, 1703. He was prebendary of Hilton, in the Collegiate Church of Wolverhampton, and also of Monmore.

He married for his first wife Mrs. Bridgett Jevon, and for his second wife Mrs. Susanna Stanton, of Wolverton, in Warwickshire. He repaired the Vicarage of Snitterfield, in which work he spent between £200 and £300. He gave by his last will and testament all his lands and books (except some few) to ye ministers of Bilston for ever (after his widow's decease). He also gave 40 shillings towards erecting the school-house in Bilston.

A nephew of this clergyman, Mr. Isaac Tomkys purchased in 1690 the remainder of the property belonging to the Mollesleys, who had left Bilston shortly before. He lies buried in St. Leonard's Church, in the south wall of which is a small iron plate, with this inscription:—

"Near this place lyes ye bodye of Isaac Tomkys, late of Warwick, son of Isaac Tomkys by his first wife Margaret Warters, who departed this life August 15, 1728."

"He shall enter into peace; they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness."

Mr. Ames thus records his funeral. Augst 17, 1728, was interr'd in Bilston Chapell undr his own Pew, Isaac Tomkys, gent, son of Mr. Isaac Tomkys, formerly of Bilston, by his first wife, Mrs. Margaret Warter, sistr of Capt. Will: Warter, Esqre, of Swancott, in Worfield p'ish, Shropshire. This Mr. Isaac Tomkys had a liberal education, was a commoner of Wadham's Coll: Oxon. He was never married, and his estate is now descended to Tho: Tomkys, his kinsman, who lives att Neachells, (Wednesfield). This Mr. Isaac was also heir-at-law to ye Rev. Mr. John Tomkys, late Vicr of Snitterfield, Warwicksh: He would not be persuaded to conform to his uncle's will (by which his estate was devised to ye Curacy of Bilston) and therefore Bilston inhabitants were

obliged to prove ye will in Chancery, which has subjected that estate to a charge of more than £250, towds which I have payd £10 to Mr. John Hayes. I think indeed he acted therein directly contrary to ye will and meaning of his uncle. His kinsman bestowed upon him a genteel and splendid funeral. The bearrs and myself had white gloves, gold rings, and white silk scarfs and hat bands." The widow of the above mentioned Rev. John Tomkys died May the 15th, 1726. Thomas Tomkys, of Neachells, the heir of the above Isaac was the possessor of great estates in and near Bilston. In the levy book for 1753 he is charged upon 400 acres within the township of Bilston alone. In a note to Dr. Darwin's *Economy of Vegitation*, he says of this Thomas. "About 400 acres of valuable freehold, copyhold and leasehold land, with mines of coal, ironstone and freestone, at Bilstone, the yearly value of which, independent of coal, &c., being about £700, was lately advertised to be sold at Garraway's Coffee-house, London, by order of the trustees of the late Thomas Tomkys, Esq. This was in 1758."

Just before he died, that is to say, on Dec. 19, 1757, the following curious advertisement appeared in Aris's Gazette:— "For the encouragement of Trade and Industry, and the lessening of luxury and idleness, Land to be given away in the Liberty of Bilstone, for to build upon, which lies next the great road, and where coals will be delivered at 2d. a cwt., and which is neither copyhold, nor under the breath or Jurisdiction of a ————

By Thomas Tomkys, gent."

Fancy such an advertisement appearing now-a-days!

His successor dying at Bath in 1768, the estates devolved upon Thomas Loxdale, Esq., of Shrewsbury, in trust for himself and others.

"The Hoo Family."

Shaw, in his History of Staffordshire tells us that "within the Manor of Bradley the family of the Hoos have very anciently been possessed of a tenement; with several lands belonging, which yet continues to their posterity."

The Hoos were of Norman-French extraction and settled in Bradley in the 13th century. The etymology of the name itself is both curious and interesting. "Hoo" in the Anglo-Norman phraseology meant a hollow ground or pit used for the assembly of the tenants of a manor, and in which the court leets anciently were held. The name is retained in many parts of England still, and always with this signification; as in Parson's Hoo-Croft, mentioned in *Newcourt's Repertorium Ecclesiasticum Parocheale* (1710), and Bingham's Hoo in Buckinghamshire. There is also, which is more to the point Hoo-Marsh in the Manor of Bradley, on the Wednesbury side, from which the family now under consideration took its name, and not the marsh after the family, as one local writer has assumed.

Mr. Ames writing in 1700 says "Though att p'sent there be in Bradeley Lordshipp but three habitations,—wch are all belonging to John Hoo, Esqre, yet anciently there were severall more, for in one deed, John Rogers de Bradeley, *Tho: atte Hoo* de eadem, Roger Bovebroke de eadem, are all witnesses, and Will: Barnndesley de Bradeley is ye granter, and Tho: Rogers de Bradeley one of ye grantees. Dated 5th Hen. 5th (i.e. 1417)."

This Thomas atte Hoo, was succeeded by Walter, called *de la Hoo* in an old deed dated 1450, in which he surrenders to William Mowlesley de Bilston a toft of land in Bradeley, called "Oke Meadow." We know not who succeeded him, but in the sixteenth of Henry 8th, we find a John Hoo, of Bradley, who married Elizabeth, daughter of —- Hopkins, of Wednesbury, by whom he had Richard, son and heir, Alexander, Alice and Dorothea. Richard, married Catherina daughter and heiress of Thomas Butler, of Alspath-hall, Warwickshire, and had one son William Hoo, or How, who was summoned by Glover, Somerset herald in 1583 to appear before him and record his descent and arms. This he did, but for some reason not explained, he was disclaimed as *ignobilis*. He married Dorothea *filia Humfridi Ashfeild de Hethrop in Com. Oxon.* From him descended Humphrey, son and heir, who died without issue, Anthony who married Margaret, daughter and co-heir of Richard Wilks, of Bilston; Thomas, who succeeded to the family estate on his

brother's death in 1614, and Catherine. His eldest son died unmarried in 1614, aged 13 years, and his second son John Hoo succeeded. In 1614, Anthony Hoo again appeared before the Herald and established his claim to the right of bearing arms, putting in amongst other documents as proofs, the following:— *Sciant presentes et futuri quod Ego Joh'es D'ns de Bradley dedi &c., Joh'i filio Roberti pro servitio suo et p' XV solidis argenti quos mihi dedit p' manibus sex seliones jacentes in Campo de la Hoo &c. Hiis testibus Reginaldo de Newport, Rogers de Henhull, Rogero Brereto', Johannes de la Hoo, Roberto de la Hoo, et aliis.* This deed is without date.

The arms recorded at the Visitation of Staffordshire in 1614, are:—

Quarterly Sable and Argent, a bordure erminois.

Crest. Within an annulet, or, a maiden's head and bust affrontio proper, crined gold.

In 1710. John Hoo, of Bradley, purchased the Manor of Wednesbury from the Sheldons of Birmingham.

From the Bilston Registers we take the following extracts:

"1707. Memo. That George Perry received 40/- from some persons who had driven their teams along Bradeley causeway and broken down several stumps, which 40/- was laid out on ye road by ye appointmt of Mr. Sergeant Hoo, and was not contain'd in ye foregoing accounts."

"1718. (Charity School a/cs). I (Richard Ames) received from Mr. Sergt. Hoo 40/-, Mr. Robins then being present att Bradeley."

In the Aldridge Registers are these entries:—

"1718. Baptized—John, son of John Hoo, Esq., and Mrs. Francis, his wife, Nov. 25." [This was Mrs. Frances Lacy, from whom John Hoo inherited the Manor of Great Barr].

"1719. Baptized—Thomas, ye son of John Hoo and Frances his wife, Dec. 29." [This was the second son who succeeded to his brother's estates and died intestate in 1791. He was High

Sheriff in 1772, and lived in great affluence as a very singular old fashioned, fox-hunting Squire, in the curious ancient half-timbered house, of which Shaw gives an engraving. [The great attendance at the funeral of Mr. Thomas Hoo in 1791 was accompanied by a procession from Barr to Aldridge, was well remembered and described to me, the Rev. Jeremiah Finch Smith, M.A., by some of the old people when I came to Aldridge in 1849].

From the West Bromwich Registers we take the following:

"April 16, 1716. At a public meeting, it was agreed that the collectors of the land tax, the overseers of the poor, and other officers of the parish of West Bromwich go to Sergeant Hooe, or some other Counsel to take advice how they may come into their land tax and levies due from Bromwich hall and demesne lands." This Sergeant Hoo died in 1719, as the following entry in the Bilston Registers (to which we now return) proves.

"March 20, 1719. Was buried in the south Chancel of Wolverhampton Church, John Hoo, Esq., Sargeant at law, of Bradley in this Chapelry, aged 62 years. He died at Sargeant's Inn, London, of the stone, as I take it. He was the eldest son of Mr. John Hoo, of Bradley, and married the daughter of — Hanbury, Esq., near Bradley, but had no issue. In his lifetime he was a benefactor to the Charity Boys of Bilston, towards which Charity he gave £4 per annum. He was splendidly buried. His heir is John Hoo, Esq., of Barr."

"Feby 1726. Memo: That on Thursday ye 17th inst., ye Rev. Mr. John Dolman, rector of Aldridge, did at Stafford marry Madame Williamson. She was ye eldest daughter of Will: Bendy, of Shutt-End, in Kingswinford parish, Esqre, by his wife Margarett, who was ye daughter of John Hoo, of Bradley, gent, and sister of John Hoo, Esqre, Sergt. att law, of Bradeley aforesaid." [The latter was succeeded by John Hoo, who married Frances Scott, of Great Barr, from whom that estate descended to Joseph Scott, ancestor of the present baronet.]

"April 15, 1730. I shou'd have mentioned yt Madam Frances Hoo, (wife of John Hoo, of Barre, Esqr.) sent me att Xmas last 20/- wch I distributed as her Charity among poor people att

Bilston, of ye disposal of wch I gave her an account by lettr. N.B.—She had done ye like several times before, but I have not made mention of it. *Memento haru' O Deus.*"

"The Robyns Family."

This was one of the most ancient of the Bilston families, their origin being lost in the darkness of antiquity. The first of the name of whom we have any account was Clement Robyns, who, in 1350 was witness to a deed granted by John Mollesley, to his son John Mollesley, of Bilston. The next was Thomas Robyns, who in the 2nd Richard 2nd, surrendered, in conjunction with his wife Juliana, to Sir William Poort, ye priest of Bilston, and John Robyns, one messuage, one water mill, &c. For a herriot was given one cow valued at 6/8, and for admittance 8/-. To this deed one Will: de Bovebrok is witness, and is described as husband of Maude Robyns.

In another deed, dated the 1st of Henry IV, (1400) one Will'us Nycolas surrenders a messuage and land, *ad opus Johis Robys fils Clemts, fils Johis Carpenter dict.*

In the 6th year of Henry V, (1418) John Peppard, described as *capellanus,* and prebendary of Monmore, conveyed his lands in ye Prebendal court to Will: Robyns, of Bylston, "reserving to himself ye fish in ye marl-pitts, for ye space of 26 yeares next following. Ye ground mencioned is said to be in two fields called ye Middel-Horwall, and ye Nether-Horwall. Will: Robyns gave for fine, seizin, and herriot 10/-. By another indented writing of the same date the said Will: Robyns obliged himself and his heirs for the term of 26 yeares to pay to ye sd John Pipard 8/- yearely, and one competent carriage of land coales to be drawne by 5 horses, for ye sd ground."

Mr. Ames tells us that "one of ye family of ye Robyns' married an heiress of ye Waters's, of Willenhall, for among Mr. Robyns' writings is ye will of Roger Waters, dated *7o die Kalend Augusti anno dom 1471*, wherein he bequeaths his soul *Deo patri omnipotenti et Beatæ Mariæ et omnibus sanctis sua.* He gave *ad opus Ecclesiæ de Wolverhampton 12d. and Cappelano Cappella de*

Wyllnale 12d."

A son of John Robyns the son of Clement, William by name, surrendered his land in Windmill field to Sir Thomas de Erdington, as previously mentioned. Mr. Ames tells us that there was "in ye custody of Mr. Tho: Robyns an indulgence granted to Clemt. Robyns and Agnes his wife and their issue; dated at London, Ano Dom 1449."

In 1491, there was a priest named Will: Robyns, whose orders were dated at Lichfield January 8 of that year, and his letters of sub-deacon's orders May 28, following. In 1496, Nycolas Robyns was appointed trustee under the will of Thomas Perry, and his son Humphrey was, says Mr. Ames, of ye monastery of Hales Owen, was an acolyth, as appears by a certificate under ye hande and seale of ye abbot and Convent dated ye 10th of Decembr 1524. This Humphrey was ordained June 10, 1525, and was admitted chaplain to say mass in the college of the Blessed Virgin Mary, at Newport, for the salary of 7 marks per annum. He appears to have embraced the Protestant Reformation, and afterwards became Minister of Newport, as is evident by a feoffment under his hand and seal, dated 4th of Edward VI, in which he styles himself *Clericus* de Newport. A cousin and contemporary of this Humphrey was John, who was entered a student of all Soul's College, Oxford, in 1516, of which college he became Fellow in 1520, took his M.A. degree and was ordained. But his studies partook more of the philosopher's than the divine's—his favourite being Astrology, then much affected by the learned. Robyns, says Anthony A. Wood, made such progress in the pleasant studies of mathematics and astrology that he became the ablest person of his time for these studies. In 1531 he took his B.D. degree and was appointed one of Henry VIII's chaplains.

In 1532, he was appointed one of the Canons of his College in Oxford, and in 1543 preferred to the dignity of Canon of Windsor. On the accession of Queen Mary, he was appointed Chaplain to her Majesty. He died at Windsor on the 25th August, 1558. Wood mentions five learned treatises of his, all written in Latin, and are now preserved in M.S. in the Bodleian Library. Of this worthy Mr. Ames gives the following particulars—"There

was one John Robyns who was placed at Windsor, and had a prebend in Wolverhampton (Monmore); for, in a letter to his brother William, he desires him to look after the profits of the Prebend, and speaks of Mr. Hall keeping a Court for him." When the chantry of St. Leonard's, Bilston, was dissolved 1553, the 4 bells in the steeple were handed over to Commissioner Robyns, to be safely kept for his Majesty's use. In 1618, one Nycolas Robyns was steward of the Lord of the Manor of Stow Heath, and bailiff of Bilston. In 1664, William Robyns left Bilston and went to live at Compton, near Wolverhampton, and it was from documents in his possession that Mr. Ames obtained his notes respecting the Family. In concluding his extracts from them Mr. Ames says, "But many of his writeings are embezell'd, for many I took remarks from abt 8 yeares agoe are gon, and no wonder, for ye house standing voyd ye last yeare and ye doores being open ye box wherein they were was burst open, and ye writeings thrown about ye Room, and many taken away by children as I was informed."

How prized would these documents be now, if they had been preserved.

Mr. Ames says:—"At present—1700—not one of this name is left in Bilston, &c."

This, however, is an error, for we find that one William Robyns, resided in what was called the "Croft House," in Bilston, in 1730. One branch of this family went to Byshbury, and another to Stafford.

"The Kempsons."

Though this family is very ancient, yet we have little documentary evidence relating to them. Farther back than 1575 nothing definite appears; though, at that time they were large landowners, Richard Kempson being steward to the Lord of the Manor. In 1664, Thomas Kempson, of Sardon, was disclaimed at the Public Assizes held at Stafford, as not entitled to bear arms. Mr. Ames says:—"It appears by severall rent rolls that ye Kempsons have had a very fair and plentiful estate in Bilston."

In Tettenhall churchyard, there is a stone erected (now

partly defaced) to the memory of another of this family, having the following inscription:—

"Here lyethe ye bodye of Thomas Kempson, of Bilston, who married ye daughter of H. Southwick, who departed ys life Oct. 16, 1671.—

R. I. P."

In the Church Register, the Rev. Edward Best says of Edward Kempson:—"Edward Kempson, Gent., was buried September 18, 1750. He was descended from a very ancient family—perhaps the most ancient in Bilston—which had formerly been possessed of a very large estate, but much diminished by some of this gentleman's ancestors. Mr. William Kempson, father of Edward, was the first of the family heirs that engaged in trade, by which means, he, in some measure, raised the diminished estate. He (Edward) was an honest man, and a good christian, sincere to his friends, and generous to his acquaintances. He married Mrs. Mary Mills, of Handsworth, by whom he left five sons and one daughter. When I offered myself as a candidate for the curacy or living of Bilston, in the latter end of 1736, he espoused my cause and strenuously supported my interests, and there ever after subsisted the most intimate friendship betwixt us."

The last was Willis Kempson, of whom Shaw says:—"He was the son (in law) of Gough, of the Old Fallings, and died about 1788. He was a magistrate for the County, and his Residence was opposite the Market-place.

"The Pype Family."

This family is of very ancient standing in Bilston, and figured prominently in most of the events which go to make up the history of the township. Notes respecting various of its members are given by Huntsback, Erdswick, Shaw and other County antiquaries, but no one has attempted to give us more than a genealogical summary of the pedigree of the family.

Shaw and Huntsbach say:—"That the Pypes were a branch of the original family seated at Pype, and afterwards at Pipe Ridware, there seems no reason to doubt. It has not, however,

been demonstratively proved by existing documents; and when a regular series of names begin at Bilston, commencing at the 20th of Richard II., just at the time the male line became extinct, (at Pipe Ridware) it appears probable."

The historian assumes what has been proved to be a historical fact, a regular succession of Pipes occurring at Bilston in the manner mentioned. But if the Bilston Pipes were descended from the Pypes of Ridware they settled here half a century earlier than Shaw assumes. The *Normanorum villarum* for Staffordshire in the 9th of Edward II. gives in the hundred of Seisdon, the holder of the manor of Bradley in Bilston parish, as one "Thomas de Pype." This same Thomas was summoned in the 8th year of the same monarch's reign to repair to Newcastle-upon-Tyne, well fitted with horse and arms, to march with the King against the Scots, who were then in arms.

His son Richard Pype was a Juror on an inquisition in the Michaelmas Term, 42nd of Henry III, before which Margaret de Bromwich appeared and sued John Wygot a servant of Walter de Everos, for imprisoning her against the King's peace. He did not appear and was attached by Richard de Pype and John Bungy. The next was Robert Pype who was chosen by Bishop Alexander, of Lichfield, as his attorney to appear on his behalf, for that he, the bishop, had without warrant made a saltatorium (deer-leap) against the boundary of Cannock forest, in his park at Brewood. This was in the year 1286. The same Robert was summoned along with Roger, Bishop of Lichfield, and Richard Trumwyne, and three others to show why they had disseized Richard de Bentelegh (Bentley) and Matilda his wife of three hundred acres of heath in Cannock forest. He was succeeded by Randulph Pype in the year 1293, whose son Robert Pype de Bilston succeeded in 1342. This Robert had two sons, John and Thomas, John was witness to a deed signed *apud Darlaxston dies Petri ad* vincla (13th Edward III. 1339.) Thomas was educated for the Church and became a chantry priest in Lichfield Cathedral, as appears from the chapter muniments of that period. John the elder succeeded to the estates and married a daughter of Hugh Mowlesley (Moseley) by whom he had several children, Walter, (his heir),

John, who became Vicar of Bradley, near Stafford, and Joan. This John feoffed one John de Hardeshall who in the 29th Edwd. III (1354) had married the above-mentioned Joan de Pype, of Bilston.

This priest afterwards became Prebendary of Hilton, in the Collegiate Church of Wolverhampton, and subsequently Archdeacon of Coventry, and died in 1374. In the 20th year of Richard II. Gwalter de Pype was witness to the will of John de Byllestone, in which the latter gave certain lands in Bilston to his children, John, Margaret, and Joan. In the 36th of Henry VI. William Pype is described in an old deed as son and heir of William Pype. This William and his brother John were two of the landowners in Bilston who agreed in 1458 to surrender certain land lying in the "Windmill Fields" in Bilston, and in the Crofts called Prisons Croft, Pagebirch Croft, and Moxall Croft, to the use of Sir Thomas de Edrington, for the purpose of founding a chantry in Bilston Chapel, called Erdington's Charity, to be held by the priest for the time being on condition he prayed for the repose of the souls of the founders. This deed is still preserved in the muniments of the Wrottesley family, and was exhibited in the archæological section of the last Wolverhampton exhibition. The next of the family of whom any record exists was Thomas de Pype, of Billestun, who deceased in the 5th year of Henry VII, leaving two sons, John and Richard. John died without issue twelve years after his father, and Richard, his brother, was left his heir. The said Richard died in the 33rd year of Henry VIII, and was buried September 16 of that year in our Lady's Chapel, in Wolverhampton Church. He left a widow (who was Alice, the daughter of Ralph Baron Ducie), and two sons, John, his heir, and Richard, an infant, who subsequently became Lord Mayor of London. The latter, after receiving an education worthy of his position, displayed a strong inclination for commercial pursuits, and he was accordingly placed with a wealthy London mercer, of high reputation, named Wallingford. Here he displayed such excellent business qualifications, and at the same time such superior literary tastes, that he became known to some of the most prominent scholars and merchants of the time; associating with some of Shakespeare's contemporary dramatists, if not with

Shakespeare himself, though showing such prudence that it never injured his commercial reputation with the grave and prejudiced city fathers. At the age of 25 he married Margaret, a daughter of Nicholas Moseley, of Bilston, by whom he had two sons, Humphry and Samuel, the latter of whom afterwards became Lord of the Manor of Bradley, by succession to Sir Richard Hussey. "In a rentall of the Tythe Hay of Bilston," given in the registers of St. Leonard's, Bilston, arrived at by composition between the lords of the manor and the chief tenants, as well as in another document, in the same register, headed "For the ancient meadowing, as well according to ancient custom as the before-said composition," Sir Richard Pype's name heads the list as principal landowner. He built a splendid mansion near the present Pipe Hall, and here he spent most of his time, when he could release himself from the cares and anxieties of his business and public duties in the city, which he was called upon largely to share in. He was elected a councillor for his ward of Bishopsgate, and so well did he look after the welfare of the citizens that he was in 1570 elected Alderman of his ward. His house became the resort of many of the most eminent men in politics, literature, and commerce, for he was skilful in conversation, eminent in tact and judgment, gay with the witty, grave with the venerable, wise with the learned. He encouraged the arts, patronised literature, helped the needy, and fed the poor. In the year 1572, he was elected sheriff, and had the honour of representing the city before Elizabeth, when business or policy induced the City Council to appeal to the Queen. In 1578, he was raised to the highest civic dignity, and on several occasions showed his will and power to benefit the citizens not only generally, but those of his own ward particularly. During his mayoralty a dispute occurred respecting the boundaries of Aldgate and Bishopgate wards, Sir Rowland Heyward, alderman of the former ward, claiming certain houses of considerable value as belonging to his ward. This contention Sir Richard Pype resisted, and challenged proof of Sir Richard Rowland's claim. The matter was argued on several occasions before the Court of Aldermen, with the result that Sir Richard Pype secured the disputed houses to his own ward, by the admirable way in which he searched for proofs and placed his facts before the Court. A striking proof of the esteem with which he was regarded in the

literary world is afforded by the fact that Stephen Gosson dedicated his famous book "A short apology for the School of Abuse, 1579, to the Right Honourable Sir Richard Pype, knight, Lorde Maior of the Citie of London, and the right worshipful his brethren, continuance of health and maintenance of civil Government." He was succeeded by his son Samuel, and he by Walter Pype, who in 1631 was fined £12 for not appearing to be Knighted. He had two sons; the elder Samuel lived as a gentleman on his Bilston estate, and took a prominent part in all affairs relating to the parish. He signed the earliest preserved page of the Bilston Chapelwardens' accounts, for the year 1669, and was several times Chapelwarden. He died in 1706, and the event is thus recorded in the Registers, written by his friend the Rev. Richard Ames, Curate:—"Nov. 2, 1706. On ye same day, about seven o' ye clock in ye morning, Samuel Pipe, Esq., died of a cholic, or such like acute illness, having been reasonably hearty ye evening before, aged as I take it about 65 years. He left ten pounds to ye poor." This gift which was to be raised upon a piece of land was lost about the year 1780. The brother of this Samuel Pipe was named Walter, but he died when a youth, and was buried in Wolverhampton Church, September 1, 1650. Samuel Pipe had two sons, James, who became heir, and Humphrey, who died a little before his father, and two daughters, Sarah and Mary. Humphrey Pipe was educated at Oxford, and took his M.A. degree there about 1684. The Wolverhampton Registers contain this entry respecting him. "Humphrey Pype, A.M., under-master of Wolverhampton Grammar School, and youngest son of Samuel Pype, Esq., of Bilston; buried August 23rd, 1705, aged 43 years." In the Bilston Registers, we have this entry: "1705-6. Tis said yt Mr. Humphrey Pipe has, by his last will and testament, left a considerable sum of money to be laid out in charitable uses in Bilston, in case his son Samuel die before he comes of age. His sister Mrs. Sarah Pipe has likewise by her last will left £40, after her decease to be also laid out in some charitable uses at Bilston, *if she do not alter her will in this particular. Ideo Quare.*" Notwithstanding this somewhat curious and cautious addendum to the above note, it appears that the lady did not alter her will, for at her death, which occurred September 20th, 1732, her

will contained the bequest of £40 alluded to. The charity, however, as was so often the case, was distributed but very irregularly, for in 1754, when an enquiry was instituted into the condition of the parochial charities, it was found that a sum of seventeen pounds had accumulated in the shape of interest. This was ordered to be applied to the purposes of the donor; and the following memorandum recorded: "It is also unanimously agreed that from Michaelmas next (1754) the interest of Mrs. Sarah Pipe's legacy shall be applied for the schooling of poor children, pursuant to the recommendation of Mrs. Pipe's executors."

(Signed) Ed. Best, Minister.
Rd. Careless, Chapelwarden,
and others.

In spite of this, however, the interest was only paid for a few years, and was then irrecoverably lost. The prospective legacy referred to of Mr. Humphrey Pipe was never received, because his son survived the age of twenty-one, and had of course the control of the moneys thus contingently left. I have already, in a previous note, mentioned the fact that the Pipes held the Manor of Bradley from the time of James I. In the year 1748, James Pipe, the heir of Samuel Pipe, sold the manor to Captain Barber, of Summerfield, and his heir sold it to John Wilkinson, the famous ironmaster. This James Pipe died without issue, and so ended the Bilston branch of this ancient Staffordshire family. Mary was married to Mr. Edward Perry, gentleman, of Bilston. The following entry in the Bilston registers records her death:— "March ye 18th, 1706-7 ye said Mrs. Mary Perry dyed of a feverish illness, and was buried near her father (Mr. Saml. Pipe) in my Lord Bradford's chancell, in Wolverhampton Church, March ye 20th, by night." Representatives of the original family still survive in the north of the county.

The arms of the family are variously given. In 1614, Samuel Pipe gives them thus:—

Vert, Semée of crosses crosslett, Or, two organ pipes pileways of the last. Crest, a ..... head argent crowned Or, issuant from the crown a plume of five feathers, also Or.

Dugdale gives them thus:—

Azure crossetty, two organ pipes erected Chevron ways—Or.

Sir Simon Degge thus:—

Vert, 2 pipes meeting pileways between nine crosslets 3. 3. 2. 1.

Samuel Pipe in 1664 gives the following,

Vert, two organ pipes pileways between ninè crosslets, Or,
Crest—A lion's head erased affronteè Argent, crowned with an Earl's coronet Or, issuing therefrom a plume of five ostrich feathers of the first.

The variations, however, occurred through marriages. The family resting place of the Bilston Pipes was in Wolverhampton Church, the registers of which contain many entries of births, marriages, and deaths relating to the various members. Shaw particularises the position of the burial place in the following note: Adjoining the south side of Mr. Moseley's stone, is an alabaster stone, which was laid over one of the Pypes of Bilston, the inscription being worn away, only at one end there remaineth—"*Quidem Richardus obiit* (1542, according to register)."

"The Perry Families."

The Perrys claim an honourable distinction among the ancient families of the Town for their territorial importance, and for the magisterial and manorial dignities sustained by them through a succession of centuries dating back from the middle of the 13th. The Bilston Perrys, there is reason to believe, were descendants of the Pyrries or Piries of Perry Barr and Handsworth, who were settled there almost as far back as the time of the Conquest. The earliest member of the Bilston family we have any knowledge of was one Henricus Pyrie, whose father Henry de Piri was fined 1 mark in the 10th of King John for being concerned with his wife and mother, in hiding an accused person from the pursuit of the Sheriff. Henricus, the younger, in, or about 1256, was witness to a grant of land made by John de Bilston to William atte Moor. The next we meet with was Thomas Perye who, in 1297, received a grant of 5 acres of land from John de Bradley, for

some services which the said Thomas had rendered him. This Thomas was married to Juliana, a daughter of Ralph de Darlaston, and had issue several sons and daughters. The eldest son, Roger, married for his first wife Matilda Ruggeley, of the family of the Ruggeleys, of Shenstone, who subsequently held the Manor of Bradley, but she did not long survive the marriage. For his second wife he married Helena, relict of Hugh Wylkes, of Dudley. A younger brother of this Roger married Joan Bovebroke, of Bilston.

Will'us Perrye executed a deed at Wylnall, bearing date Maii 24, 1401, wherein he gave to John his son, "a piece of land with ye two cole-pits called ye "Holloway," and ye "Delves," situate in Bilston, near to Windmill-field, to him and to his heirs for ever; according to the customary tenure of the Manorial Court; and the said John gave to Henricus de Billeston LV denarii for a Heriot." He afterwards went to London, where he married; but after gaining great riches returned to Bilston, where he died in the year 1439, and was buried at the foot of the "Danish Monument" in Wolverhampton Churchyard.

Thomas Perrye, son of the above, "gave a piece of land, callyd St. Leonard's Hill, for ye maintenance of divine service in Bylston Chapel."

In 1458, William Perrye was one of the persons who surrendered his land in Windmill Field, in Bilston, to Sir Thomas de Erdington, for the purpose of granting it to the Chantry of St. Leonard. In 1504, John Perye was bailiff of Bilston; and in 1530, his son William Perrye purchased the Corner House in Bilston, from the Lee family, and from this residence that branch of the family was subsequently called Perrye de Corner. Another branch was called Perrye de Gate, and a third Perrye de Croft, distinguishing the several Perrys by their places of residence.

According to Mr. Ames, a son of William Perry de Corner was educated for a priest. His note says:—"At Hales Owen Church, (which is in Worcestershire) there was a monastery of Monks of ye Premonstratensian Order, as appears by a Certificate under ye seale of ye Abbot and Convnt dated 1531, wch instrument

is in ye custody of Edward Perrye de Corner. Of this monastery was Clemt Perrye, ye son of Willm Perrye, of Bilston (i.e. of ye Corner House) abt ye yeare above sd. He was there as an Acolyth, and upon his being ordained priest he came and (I conceive) lived at Bilston, for I finde yt his orders were exhibited at Wolverhampton. He was as is mentioned in another page parson of Bilston in the time of Philip and Mary. In an ancient rental of the Tithe pay of Bilston of the time of Queen Elizabeth, the following landowners are mentioned and their proportion of assessmt:—

Humphrey Perrye, Esq., - - - -	xiis.
Roger Perrye - - - - - - -	xiiis.
Edward Perrye - - - - - -	xs.

In 1535, Edward Perrye, steward to the Lord of the Manor, married Elizabeth Kempson, and had one son named Thomas, who was educated at Oxford, and took his degree. Thomas married Mary Wrottesley in 1570, died about the year 1584, and was buried in "Our Lady's Guild," Wolverhampton, leaving one son—Thomas —who became the father of William Perry, better known as "The Boy of Bilston," an account of whom has been given in a previous chapter. The "Boy of Bilston" married a daughter of Walter Foxall, a family of ancient standing in the town. He had a son, John, who was Chapelwarden of Bilston in the year 1669, and signs the Constable's accounts for that year,—the oldest entry of the existing registers. From the Calendar of the Parliamentary Committee for Compounding with Royalists or "Malignants" for possession of their estates, the name of William Perrie, Bilston, appears for the year 1648.

In 1670, Edward Perrye was one of the principal landowners in Bilston. He was Manorial bailiff, collected the Manorial rents, &c. He left one son named Edward, who was born Sept. 16, 1674, and married at Willenhall, in 1701, Mrs. Mary Pipe, daughter of Samuel Pipe, Esq., of Bilston, and went to reside at Wolverhampton. He died March 18, 1728, and was buried in Lord Bradford's Chapel, Wolverhampton, leaving one son Thomas, who died a few months after. The above-named Edward was Chapelwarden of Bilston, in 1703.

In 1704, George Perry was Chapelwarden. In 1706, we have this memorandum by Mr. Ames.—"Yt Mr. John Perry of Cannock, ye only son of Mr. Humphrey Perry of Stafford, (my landlord for ye house I now live in) was buried ye same day (March 5) and much abt ye same houre att Cannock, as my mother was buried att Wolverhampton, viz., about 5 of ye clock in ye afternoon. He married Mrs. Dorothy, ye sister of Mr. Edward Wilson, of Cannock, by whom he had no issue." Mrs. Mary Perry, wife of Edward Perry abovesd died March 20th, 170$\frac{6}{7}$ and was buried in Lord Bradford's Chancell, in Wolverhampton Church.

Another of the Perrys was Humphrey, father of John Perry, of Cannock aforesaid. He was a man of much wealth and of a very benevolent spirit. After his marriage, however, he went to reside at Stafford, where he died. Of him Mr. Ames thus writes, "Nov. 11th 1716. Humphrey Perry, of Stafford, Esqre, departed this life at Haywood. He was one of His Majesty's Justices of ye Peace for this County, and was my good friend. He was the only son of John Perry, of Bilston, by his wife Mrs. Jane Palmer. He left no issue living. I understand he gave by his last will £26 per annum, issuing out of his copyhold estate at Bilston, for charitable purposes, and £100 in money to be laid out in building a house for ye Curates of Bilston. He was buried ye 14th of Novembr in ye south corner of ye Chancell of Stafford Church, near his wife Mrs. Catherine Abnett."

In the list of the names of those Catholics who refused to sign the oath of allegiance to George I, preserved in the office of the Clerk of the Accountant General appears the name of

	£	s.	d.
"Thomas Perry, Locksmith, of Bilston - -	3	13	0"

In 1724, and again in 1734, Alexander Perry was one of the Churchwardens of Bilston, and from the following entry in his accounts for the former year it is clear that the Perrys were by no means all Papists.

	s.	d.
"August 13th my charges concerning ye Papists -	4	0"

That is to say, he had to make the official return of all the Papists in the town, according to Act of Parliament. In the Register for 1725, Mr. Ames thus writes:—"May 23, being Trinity Sunday, Dr. John Hough, Bishop of Worcester, did att Hartlebury confer Deacons Orders on Tho: Perry, A.B. of Baliol Coll: Oxon. He was son of Mr. Edward Perry by Mrs. Mary, youngest daughter of Mr. Samll Pipe, of Bilston. He became first of all, Curate to Mr. Eginton, Vicar of Wednesbury, and in Septr 1727 was ordained priest in Eccleshall Church by Dr. Edward Chandler, Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry."

Another Thomas Perry was parish Clerk of Bilston from 1715 to 1730. The heiress of the above Mr. Edward Perry, Jane, was married October 13th 1729, at Rushall to Wm Hope, Esq., M.D., of Stafford. She gave to Bilston Chapel her brother's surplice which he used while he was a scholar at Baliol. "*Deus connubia reddit prospera*" adds Mr. Ames. In 1748, Alexander Perry signed with other inhabitants an agreement between the inhabitants and Curate, and also many of the Chapelwardens' Accounts. In 1774, a Humphrey Perry was parish clerk. In 1825, Mr. Thomas Perry, the founder of the famous Highfields Establishment, was one of the first signatories to a petition to Parliament, praying for an Act to make a public Market in Bilston. In 1842, when Church Rates were abolished the same Mr. Perry was one of the mortgagees of the rates to the amount of £246, the balance of a large sum advanced towards the rebuilding of St. Leonard's Church, on the security of the rates. This gentleman left four children, two sons and two daughters, viz., Frederick Charles, Thomas Joseph, Jane Margaret, and Helen. Of these, Frederick Charles and Helen still survive. Mr. Frederick Charles resides at Dunston, a fine estate, which he has very largely beautified. In 1886-8, the parish Church of Dunston was rebuilt by the widow and children, in memory of the late Thomas Perry, Esq., of Bilston, abovementioned. Memorials to Mary, the widow of above, to Jane Margaret, and to Thomas J. Perry, J.P., are erected in Dunston Church. Mr. Frederick Charles Perry is a Justice of the Peace, a Deputy Lieutenant, and an Ex-High Sheriff of the County. His sister Miss Helen Perry resides at the Wergs, near Wolverhampton,—where the

late T. J. Perry, also resided. Mr. F. C. Perry is now the last surviving male representative of the three ancient families of Perry, known by the names of Perry de Gate, Perry de Croft, and Perry de Corner. It has been found impossible to distinguish the members of the several branches, because the residences are only rarely affixed to the entries in the parochial records.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Manor of Bradley. Its ancient possessors. The Families of de Bradley, Rudgley, and Hussey.

IT is a remarkable fact that though Bradley was anciently an independent Manor, having customs, tenures, fines, courtleet, &c., yet nothing is now known of its customs or tenures, or of the time when it lost its manorial character. There may be many reasons for this unusual decay of manorial rights, and absence of documentary evidence. For one reason no church existed within its precincts, and thus one of the most valuable mediums of perpetuating local history was wanting. Another reason we may assume to be the fact that up till the sixteenth century the manor formed part of the hunting ground of the Lords of Dudley, and was practically without population, while there never were even up to the year 1700 more than five capital messuages within the Manor, the remainder of the habitations being merely swine herd' and foresters' cottages. In dealing with documentary evidence the difficulty of always distinguishing between the Bradleys of the County, of which there are three, is sometimes insurmountable, and in all such cases we have discarded the entries. The Manor as we have shown in our references to Doomsday belonged in the time of the Conqueror to Roger Fitz Ansculf, Baron of Dudley, and that one Untan was under-tenant to Walbertus, the overlord's tenant-in-Chief. In the 10th year of Henry III, Roger de Sumery was Lord of Bradley, and to him succeeded his son Nycolas, as the following extract proves. "*Nycolas Sumary est in custodiä com: Cestr dom, Rege terra ejus en hoc hundro. Valet XV libr.*" This

family were Lords of Dudley, and connected with some of the most powerful nobles in the Kingdom.

In Pope Nicholas's taxation for Staffordshire, 12th of Edward I, (1291) Bradley is charged XI marks.

In the same reign the manors of Womborne, Oxlie, Bradley and others, were granted to Wm. de Overton, to be held by the service of Knight's fees.

In the Liber Niger Scaccarii we have this entry, A.D. 1200, Richard, son of William, gave all his land of Womborne in frank marriage with Matilda his daughter, to Alan, son of Walter de Overton. This Walter de Overton held a Knight's fee under the Barony of Dudley at Orton and Bradley, and at an Inquisition upon the lands of Roger de Somery, 20 Edward I, the jury returned that William de Overton held of Roger, Womborne, Overton, Oxeley, and Bradeley by the service of 2 Knight's fees.

In the Assize Roll for 1st John (1199) "Bradeleya is amerced 1 mark *pro transgressione.*"

In the Calendar of Final Concords or Pedes Finium temp Henry III, we have the following case recorded. "Case heard at Lichfield, 29th October, 1221, Walter, son of Geoffrey is the Complainant and Thomas de Dorlaveston (Darlaston) Defendant. The record is as follows. "An acre of meadow in Bradeley; and between the said Walter and Robert del Ho, tenant of half a hide of land in the same vill: Thomas and Robert acknowledge the land to be the right of Walter, and Walter grants a mark of silver to Thomas for the acre of meadow, and the said Walter grants all the said land to Robert, to be held of him and his heirs by Robert and his heirs for half a mark yearly."

In the following year, we have another case recorded in the same Calendar. "The case was tried at Westminster, April 17th 1222. The complainant was Walter de Bradley and the defendant William de Sumery. The record is as follows:—"Sixteen acres of wood in Bradeley. Walter and his heirs to hold eight acres of the wood, viz:—those which lie between Bradeley and Bilstone of

William and his heires for 6d. annually, for which Walter gave William 6 marks of silver and quit-claimed to William and his heirs all his right to the remainder of the wood."

From the Plea Rolls of Henry III, 9th year, we take the following relating to this Walter.

"It was testified by a jury that Sweni and Andrew, the Beadles of the Hundred of Seisdon, had removed all the Knights who had been first put upon the Assize for a reward, and they said that the following had been first named for the Assize, viz., Walter de Bradeley, &c."

From the same Rolls for the 12th year of Henry III, we take the annexed.

"An Assize was held to enquire whether Geoffrey de Bradelea, father of Walter was seised, &c., of half a mill in Seisdon when he died, and which Simon de Tresel holds. Simon appeared and conceded the Assize; and the jury say that the said Geoffrey did not die seised of the tenement in question, because Bernard de Tresel, the father of Simon, held it for half a year before the death of the said Geoffrey. Walter is therefore *ad misericordia* (i.e. at the mercy of the Court) and to pursue his claim by another writ if he chooses. Sureties for his fine are James de Mortun and William de Bradehurst."

In the 39 Henry III, Walter de Bradeley was one of the 12 jurors appointed for the Hundred of Seisdon: while in the Plea of the Forest of Kinver for 46th of Henry III, Walter de Bradelega is entered as one of the reguardors, or keepers. In the year 1271, Reginald de Bradley was one of the reguardors of the same forest. In the same year Reginald de Bradeley was one of the pledges for Robert de Haggelegh and others, who had taken a stag out of the forest, and were fined 40/-

In the reign of Edward II, the manor had again changed hands—then being in the possession of Walter de Bradley—unless the successor to Wm. de Overton had adopted the name of the manor he held, as was then commonly done.

Walter de Bradley held the manor 16 years, when Reginald his son succeeded him.

On this subject Shaw says:—"The first which I find anything of was Walter de Bradley, who gave a rent charge of 12/- per annum, issuing out of certain lands in this lordship, for the lights, &c. in Wolverhampton Church.

To this Walter, Philip, lord of Rowley, granted, in consideration of ten marks of silver, all the men and tenants in Rowley underwritten; CUM TOTA SEQUELA ET CUM OMNIBUS EORUM CATTALIS, VIZ., Richard de Terhull, Richard de Doergate, Robert le Taylor, William, son of William de Terhull, Roger, son of Roger de Oldbury, Philip de Wineshurst, and Agnes, his mother with all their rents and services, except regal services, &c."

Walter de Bradley left one son, Reginald, and two daughters, viz:—Sibill, wife of William de Bosco Womborne, with whom he gave in frank marriage a meadow in Trysull, and Juliana to whom he gave several lands in Bradley.

Reginald de Bradley, for the consideration of a horse of 1 mark price, confirmed his father's gift to William de Bosco.

In the 44th of Edward III, the Manor was granted by Lucia, daughter of John, to John Jones and Richard Atte Town, but these regranted it to the Bradleys.

In the 6th of Richard II, (1336) John de Bradley was Lord, and in the 7th of Henry IV, Roger de Bradley granted away land in Bradeley, as appeared by a deed dated at Bradley, to which Thomas Brierley (hence the name of Brierley Lane in that Manor) was one of the witnesses. The last male of the direct branch of this family was one John de Bradeley, who left one daughter who carried the estates to Humphrey Rudgeley; whose son Richard was proprietor of the Lordship in the year 1508. To him succeeded Francis Rudgley who with his mother Margaret granted to Richard Hussey, the capital Messuage, the Manor, Courtleet, Wards, &c. Francis was succeeded in the Lordship by Sir Richard Hussey who sold the Manor to Samuel Pipe, Esq., of

Bilston, second son of Sir Richard Pipe, Lord Mayor of London. The Lordship then appears to have been shortly after sold to John Hoo, Esq., of Bradley, the representative of an ancient Bradley family, an account of whom will be found in the Chapter on Ancient Families. From the Hoos' who became extinct in the 18th century, the estate passed to the Barbors of Somerford, who sold it to John Wilkinson, the great Ironmaster. After the extinction of the Family of Hoo, the Manorial continuity seems to have ended, though two centuries before that its customs and courts were more or less neglected, but in the grant by which the Manor passed from Ruggeley to Hussey, the Manor is erroneously called the Manor of Bilston, a mistake which argues a neglect of Manorial rights even then, for Bilston was strictly not a Manor. There is one more reference to make respecting Bradley. In 1435, Humphrey, Earl of Stafford gave to Will'us Jeffries, de Bradley, 15 acres of land situate in Bradley, for a consideration, &c. This passage, if it refers to Bradley near Bilston, proves that Humphrey, Earl of Stafford, must have been in possession of the Manor at the time when Shaw says it was in the hands of the "Bradleys." But it may allude either to Bradley near Bilston, or Bradley near Stafford; but that it is probably the former we are inclined to believe because the Earl of Stafford held the adjoining Manor of Darlaston at this time.

It is only on account of the difficulty in deciding as to the proper Bradley spoken of in different documents—many of which are without date and reference as to locality—that we have passed over them in silence; preferring to be accurate than voluminous.

In 1674, a large glass house was erected at Bradley, in which all kinds of glass-ware were manufactured, but from some unexplained cause it soon became disused; and after standing until the year 1790, was taken down.

Shaw in his History of Staffordshire says:—"At Bradley are still a large range of peculiar constructed ovens erected by Lord Monboddo a few years ago, for the purpose of extracting "tar" from coal by a chemical process, which not succeeding, were soon neglected." This eccentric nobleman who was

appointed a Lord of Session in 1767, and died in 1799, was one of the partners in the old Glass Works, in Bradley, a memento of which is still preserved in the place named in the locality, "Glass-house Row." Lord Monboddo was famous for his strange theories respecting the caudal appendages of human beings. Strongly convinced of the evolution theory, long before it was thought worthy of discussion among scientists, he firmly believed that every child at its birth was possessed of a tail, but that it was pinched off by the attendant medical man, before outsiders had a chance of inspection. It is alleged that he was in the habit whenever he had a chance of waiting near a chamber door where a birth was taking place, in order to have an early view of the new arrival, and satisfy himself of the truth of his conviction. Lord Monboddo's treatise on the *origin of languages* was once a well known work.

"Bradley Moor is very remarkable for a curious phenomena, commonly known by the name of "the Wildfire," which is supposed to be owing to a vein of coals having taken fire a great number of years ago, and which still continues to burn in the most extraordinary manner."

"The proprietors of the Hoo estate have lately opened a large colliery of excellent coal, having branches of the Birmingham Canal brought close to it; and there being a quantity of ironstone, Mr. Addenbrook has since erected a large furnace for the purpose of smelting that valuable commodity, which undertaking alone will consume a great part of the inferior coal."

Wesley Chapel, Bilston.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Rise of Wesleyan Methodism in the Township.

IN no county in England was Methodism so stoutly opposed, and its followers more vigorously persecuted, than in Staffordshire. John Wesley himself, on several occasions, was rudely assailed, and narrowly escaped with life. At Wednesbury and Darlaston, in particular, riots of an alarming nature occurred in 1743-4, and later. This spirit of opposition arose partly from the ignorance of the populace, and partly (but more particularly) from the bigotry and animosity of the clerical party of that day, who sought, in more ways than one, to stamp it out of existence. It is, however, with Bilston that we have here to deal.

John Wesley came to Bilston on several occasions, two of which he notes in his Journal.

Oct. 2, 1745. "It was exceedingly dark when we rode on to Bilston. However, we did not stick fast till we got into the Wednesbury road. Several coming with candles, I got out of the quagmire, and leaving them to disengage my horse, walked to Francis Ward's, where I preached."

Soon after this time, a few of Wesley's converts began to meet privately in an old house, of the Elizabethian style of architecture, (formerly standing at the south end of Wood Street) occupied by a person named Samuel Ferriday. These meetings were often attended by Francis Ward, Stephen Hipkiss, and numerous other early Methodists, and who, by their warmhearted zeal and kindness, kept the converts together and

added others to their number. March 21, 1770, John Wesley again visited Bilston, when he preached in this house. During the service, a mob congregated in the street, and after indulging in hooting and yelling, fell to stone throwing on the appearance of Mr. Wesley; several of his supporters being hit by the missiles. One of the mob struck at Mr. Wesley with a heavy stick, but the blow was turned aside by one of his followers. Mr. Wesley, however, displayed the most perfect calmness, and we are informed that on one of the mob pushing his way to Mr. Wesley's side and threatening with an oath to strike him, he turned mildly toward him, and in a firm, but gentle voice said, "If I have done thee harm, strike, man!" a proceeding which had such an effect upon the man, that he turned away and departed, followed by most of the mob.

On two occasions Wesley speaks of great riots by men from Bilstone and other places. During one of Wesley's visits to the town, Miss Loxdale heard him preach, and was so powerfully affected, that she became an ardent Methodist, though regarded by her friends, who were Churchpeople, as insane. This had no effect in weakening her zeal, but rather the contrary, for in 1784, she presented to the Society a piece of land in Temple street, as the site for a Chapel, which, when built, from the circumstance went by the name of Loxdale's Chapel. It was opened by the Rev. Joseph Benson, but was of very modest dimensions, having beams and a small floor without any front protection at one end, and capable of holding only some 130 people. One of the most prominent members of this infant Society was Mrs. Brookes, whose son James, born in 1780, subsequently became a well known Wesleyan itinerant preacher.

The first Trust Deed is dated January 31st, 1801, by which the Chapel and Ground were conveyed to Samuel Ferriday, William Underhill, Jacob Owen, (father of the Rev. J. B. Owen, at one time, Vicar of St. Mary's, Bilston), Stephen Hipkiss, Aaron Timmings, John Bagnall, B. Woolley, Edward Bagnall, Alexander Gordon, John Barnett, Charles Morris, and John Hinchcliffe for the residue of a term of 999 years, commencing April 1, 1748, upon trust for securing the Chapel for Wesleyan Methodists. A rather curious omission occurs in this deed, no power of

appointing new trustees appearing. This building soon became too small for the numbers of people regularly attending it, so that in 1812 side galleries were added and a singers' loft constructed. In the following year a small school was erected. Still the Society grew and prospered, and the trustees finding that the means of enlargement in Temple Street were insufficient, purchased, in 1825, the hall and land formerly belonging to Mr. Joseph Perry (but then in the hands of T. and J. Loxdale, Esqrs.) situate at the top of Oxford Street, upon which site the present handsome structure is built. The hall, which had for some time been an inn called the "Crown and Anchor," was altered to suit the requirements of a religious society at a cost of about £1200, the original windows being allowed to remain. The land * upon which this chapel stands was copyhold, and consisted of 7674 square yards, the mines under part of which belong to the trustees, as set forth in a deed dated September 5th, 1828, and amounting to 860 yards. Also a further portion of the mines (amounting to 1682 yards) was purchased from the Loxdale family by deed dated March 25th, 1856. The Chapel was opened for service in 1823 by the Rev. A. Summerfield, who preached from the text, "Despise not the day of small things," the collections amounting to £245 18s. 9¾d. Other special preachers were the Rev. William Atherton (father of the late Sir William Atherton, at one time Her Majesty's Solicitor-General), Rev. Robert Newton, Rev. Richard Watson, &c. This Chapel was the first building in the township lit by gas, which was manufactured on the land connected with the Chapel, and caused much attraction.

The gas apparatus was erected in the year 1823-4, and in the Stewards' accounts for that period we have the following entries, amongst others, relating thereto:—

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* Note.—It is curious to find that on the site of this Chapel stood an ancient well, which was at that time one of the principal means of supplying the town with water. When the land and hall were purchased the Chapel Trustees caused this well to be repaired and tanks provided for additional storage of water, and this water was for many years a large means of revenue, being sold at the rate of one halfpenny a pail. In the year 1827-8 the sale of water produced £28 1s. 1½d.

August	16, /23.	Cash to Mr. John Hartland for building Retorts -	1	0	0
,,		,, to John Cheshire, for labour - - -	0	16	6
,,		,, Mr. S. Baldwin towards Gasometer - -	8	0	0
,,	20	,, for Caps, Bases, &c., for iron pillars - -	7	3	2
,,	23	,, to Mr. John Hartland for Gas - - - -	2	0	0
,,		,, John Cheshire (labour)	0	12	6
,,		,, to Messrs. Burnish -	3	11	0
,,		,, Mr. Wood for 2,000 bricks for Gas - - -	2	4	0
,,		,, Mr. Hampton for Carriage on sand, &c. - -	1	16	6
,,	30	,, to Messrs. Burnish -	3	1	0
Sept.	6	,, for dressing bricks and labour - - -	0	11	$7\frac{1}{2}$
,,		,, to Messrs. Burnish -	2	6	9
,,		,, S. Baldwin towards Gasometer - -	8	0	0
,,	13	,, Edward Hartland for labour - - -	1	0	0
,,		,, Messrs. Burnish - -	1	9	4
,,	20	,, Mr. Baldwin towards Gasometer - -	1	0	0
,,		,, Mr. Burnish for repairing wall, &c. - - -	1	8	$7\frac{1}{2}$
,,	24	,, Mr. R. Corbett for timber (for gas) - - -	5	9	0
October	4	,, Mr. S. Baldwin for Gasometer - -	8	0	0
,,	9	,, Mr. Chambers (for gas)	50	0	0
Nov.	3	,, Mr. S. Baldwin for Gasometer - -	60	0	0
April	7, /24	,, Residue paid to Mr. Baldwin for Gasometer	30	17	6

In 1831 a preacher's house was erected on the site of an old barn, and was altered to its present state in 1876. The Chapel was enlarged in 1840 at a cost of £2,173 12s. 8d., new

Vestries and Class-rooms being added. The debt of £2,200 on the Chapel in 1840 was reduced to about £900 in 1843, Mr. Thomas Brueton giving £500 towards that object, and the balance was afterwards cleared off by means of a bazaar.

The first Wesleyan Sunday School was formed by Mrs. Brookes in 1797. It was held in her own house, then standing on the site of the present Market Hall, but was shortly after removed to Temple Street, where it was carried on until that Chapel was given up.

New schools were erected opposite the "Red Cow" Inn, Bridge Street, in 1827, and removed in 1834 to the present site. In 1844 they were fitted up with a gallery for a day school, the expense being partly defrayed by a portion of the Cholera Fund. In 1856 a new vestry was added, and a new trust appointed, consisting of

Mr. Robert Bew	Mr. Matthew Frost
,, Benjamin Beebee	,, David North
,, James Rowley	,, George E. Lambert
,, Joseph Sankey	,, William M. Bayliss
,, John Hartley	,, William Butler
,, John Bates	,, Benjamin Clark

In 1868, the existing Schools were built at a cost of £1,056 19s. 4d.; and in 1880, the new Infant School and Lecture Room were erected.

In 1887, an application was made to the Charity Commissioners for powers to constitute a New Trust on the basis of the "Wesleyan Chapel Model Deed." An order was issued dated the 1st day of April, 1887. The names of the Trustees then appointed are as follows:—

George Edwin Lambert, Chainmaker.
Thomas Johnson, Builder.
John Harper, Manufacturer.
William Evans, Ironmaster.
James Motlow, Blank Tray Maker.

John Edward Briant, Bank Manager.
George Legg, Stonemason.
George Williams, Grocer.
John Price, Printer.
Benjamin Beebee, Painter.
David Clark, Hosier.
Thomas Holland Hickman, Oil Merchant.
Charles Cooper Beebee, Printer.
Charles Richard Hickman, Clerk.
Ernest Frederick Gibbs, Tea Dealer.
Rowland Ault, Boot and Shoe Dealer.
Frederick Harper, Manufacturer.
John Freeman, Clerk.
Benjamin North, Ironworker.
George Henry Shakleton, Japanner.
John Yates Legg, Clerk.
John William Sankey, Ironmaster.
John Bate, Moulder.
John Beards, Ironworker.
George Harper, Clothier.
John Kirk, Stocktaker.

In 1890, the Chapel was again extensively altered and modernised. The interior has been completely renewed and admirably ornamented. Modern pews have been substituted for the closed up pews, the orchestra enlarged, the galleries altered, the old pulpit replaced by a modern rostrum, the whole of the windows greatly enlarged, the building lighted with corona pendants, the heating and ventilating apparatus replaced, a handsome portico with inner vestibules erected, new entrance gates added, and part of the boundary walls rebuilt, at a total cost of £3301, most of which is now raised.

In 1864, Bilston Chapel was made the head of a circuit, having till then formed part of Wolverhampton Circuit. The following is a list of the ministers who have resided here, since the erection of the minister's house in 1831.

1831.	Rev. Isaac Denison.
1832-3.	,, Thomas Hall.

1834.	Rev. Thomas Moss.
1835-7.	,, Thomas Hardy.
1838-9.	,, William Bytheway.
1840-1.	,, James Walton.
1842-3.	,, Aquila Barber.
1844-5.	,, John Nicklin.
1846.	,, Benjamin John.
1847-8.	,, W. R. Rogers.
1849.	,, James Osborn.
1850-1.	,, J. H. Norton.
1852-4.	,, H. Smallwood.
1855.	,, John Parkes.
1856-8.	,, J. G. Cox.
1859-61.	,, Thomas Kent.
1862-3.	,, Geo. Curnock.
1864-5.	,, John Watson.
1866-8.	,, H. Smallwood.
1869-71.	,, J. Weatherill.
1872-4.	,, W. L. Wingell.
1875-6.	,, W. Malpas.
1877-9.	,, Jos. Bailey.
1880.	,, Richard Eland.
1881-3.	,, Thomas Raspass.
1884-6.	,, Anthony Taylor.
1887-9.	,, William Parsonson.
1890-2.	,, William H. Maude.

The extensive burial ground was the receptacle for some hundreds of the victims of the first Cholera in 1832, and the Register shows, in the 69 years it has been consecrated, that 10,763 persons have been interred within it.

Hell Lane Chapel.

In the year 1802, a good-hearted old Methodist, named Haswell, preached in Hell Lane. The people evinced some hostility to the preacher, and more than one person threatened him with violence if he persisted in his purpose. But Haswell, undeterred by menaces, assembled a few of the most orderly of the people, and began his simple and earnest address. During

the service rain began to pour in torrents, and Mr. Tyrer, another noted methodist, held an umbrella over the preacher. Notwithstanding the rain the people listened attentively, and much good was done. Following Mr. Haswell came Mr. Williams, a local preacher from Shropshire (at that time bailiff for Samuel Ferriday, Esq.) and he immediately set to work to establish a Society in Hell Lane. He wrote to Conference asking permission and assistance in building a small chapel in Hell Lane, which he described as being situated near Ruffian Lane, leading to Dark Lane and Sodom. The Conference secretary replied, that if a chapel was needed anywhere it must be at Hell Lane, but could not afford him any assistance. Mr. Williams, thrown upon his own resources, immediately set to work, and one of the first gifts was a piece of land from one of the most noted characters in the lane. In two or three years his efforts were crowned with success, and a small chapel was erected in 1806. Previous to this event, however a few persons were in the habit of meeting in a room belonging to a man named Ockham, and as chairs and benches were scarce, they used to sit, during the meetings, upon planks raised on bricks.

Three of the Trustees of the chapel were named Job Hartshorn, Mr. Reeves, and Mr. Wilkes.

The opening services were conducted by Mr. Manwearing, from Shropshire, and the collections amounted to £11 os. 11d.

In the same year Mr. T. Radnall erected some Schools, for which the Society paid an annual rental. These Schools soon became well attended, and a marked improvement is noticeable in the character of the people from that date. Thieving became less and less common ; low and brutalizing sports less attractive ; and immorality of all kinds less practised. Gideon Ousley, a noted Irish missionary, often preached here to the thieves and outcasts, many of whom were brought to a saving knowledge of the truth.

The old Chapel was taken down, and a new one erected in George Street, Ettingshall, in 1834, partly with the old materials. This building was largely rebuilt in 1844, and since then a new Chapel has been erected.

Bradley Methodism.

The introduction of Methodism into Bradley seems to have been contemporaneous with that of Bilston.

The first preaching room in the Manor of which we have any record was an improvised chamber erected over a couple of wash-houses, in construction and plan evidently the work of amateurs. It was approached from the main street, or thoroughfare, by a "tortuous passage along narrow courts, under frowning entries, and past an array of back doors, suggestive of squalid homes where anything but "mirth and hospitality might reign." But frail and unsightly though the structure was, it was "the house of God, and the gate of heaven" to the little band of disciples who were accustomed to worship there.

The little Meeting House was soon found inadequate to the needs of the growing Society. How the little band succeeded in getting a new Chapel has been frequently told. It reads like a romance, yet it is a piece of well-authenticated history, that they prayed Squire Wilkinson—a good hater of the Methodists—into building them a Chapel. This Chapel was the famous "Cast Metal Meeting House," so called because the doors, window frames, and whatever else iron would do for—even the pulpit—was made of that useful metal. Squire Wilkinson was well paid for his gift in the salvation of his soul. He attended one of the opening services to see how the cast-iron pulpit looked, and the word, preached by one of his own workmen, took hold of his heart.

The Cast Metal Meeting House did good service for many years, until it, too, became inadequate to the needs of Bradley Methodism, and was replaced by the present Chapel. The iron doors, &c., of the old Chapel were converted to more secular purposes, but the cast-iron pulpit is retained in the school-room of the existing Chapel as a precious legacy of memorable times. The present Chapel, which provides accommodation for about 700 worshippers, was opened in the month of April, 1835, by Dr. Newton. The building has since been renovated and a new portico added.

There are two other branches of Methodism in the village, viz., the Primitive Methodist and Methodist Free Churches. The former have a Chapel in Salop Street, another in Lower Bradley, and a third in Daisy Bank. The latter have a Chapel in Hall Street.

CHAPTER XIX.

BILSTON IN 1790. RAPID INCREASE OF POPULATION. LOCAL VOLUNTEERING. THE OLD COACH ROAD. HOLY WELLS. COINING. ENLARGEMENT OF CHURCH. ESTABLISHMENT OF MARKET. ERECTION OF ST. MARY'S CHURCH, &C.

WE have now arrived at a period when a remarkable developement took place in the prosperity, population, and importance of the town, for an equivalent for which we have to go to the Western States of America. A tourist who passed through Bilston in 1790, thus describes it. "It is one of the largest villages in England, containing more than 1,000 houses. It is situate on a rising ground on the Old Watling Street Road from London to Holyhead, and the navigable canal (not long opened) from Birmingham to London. The Worcestershire and Staffordshire Canal also passes close by it, by which means it enjoys a constant and ready means of communication with the metropolis, the western parts, and the numerous manufacturing towns between them. Some 30 coaches pass through here daily, and the London coach weekly. It is of ancient date, probably going back as far as Saxon times. The low, many-gabled, half-timbered, octagon shaped houses of the Tudor age, are dotted about here and there, and inhabited by the gentry, and stand without any regard for regularity. The principal manufactures consist chiefly of japanned goods, buckle-chapes, which are wrought to great perfection; iron screws, and recently erected iron furnaces and foundries, worked by steam engines. I visited Mr. Wilkinson's works at Bradley, and was enabled by that gentleman's permission to

see for the first time the process of iron manufacture. It was a novel sight to see the huge machinery in motion, and I came away much gratified. The puddlers used sand bottoms in the furnaces, but Mr. Wilkinson told me he was trying experiments to do away with the sand which sometimes injured the iron very materially. The chapel is a modern edifice, though built on the foundation of an ancient structure. It is covered with slate, has a square tower of brick, and contains six bells. There are likewise a dissenting chapel and a charity school. The principal inn is the Bull, and the population, recently much increased, is 4,800."

The increase of population alluded to had been very rapid from 1780, when the population amounted to a little over 3,000. In 1821 the population had increased as follows, taken according to Act of Parliament, 1st of George IV:—Number of families within the turnpikes, 1,105; without the turnpikes, 636; in the Manor of Bradley, 768; total, 2,509. Houses building, 12; houses void, 59. These families were apportioned in trades and sexes thus:—Families engaged in farming, 20; in trades, 1,980; others, 509. The number of males was 6,141, and of females, 5,862; total 12,003. It is very curious to note in this return the reference to persons engaged in farming; but it must be remembered that Bilston at that time was far from being the black, grimy spot it is now. Not many years before this date wheat was growing on the site of the present Market Hall. Oxford Street was enclosed fields, and Cambridge Street was the site of a pleasant country farm. A second curious fact is the large number of persons returned as of no occupations. This is significant of the state of society in the town at that time. Then there was an astonishing number of handsome residences dotted about, such as those belonging to the Bickleys, Hawksfords, Greens, Lintons, Kempsons, Perrys, Loxdales, Tomkyses, and others, the proprietors of which having been possessed of goodly estates for generations had lived at ease and dignity, doing their duty when called upon by the voice of the people to fill public offices, but letting the speculations of the world outside alone. They have been long elbowed out of existence by a busier class of men, whose God is mammon, and now their race is as extinct

as the ichthyosaurus of pre-Adamite ages. A third curious fact is the predominance of males over females. This is so unusual that a word or two in explanation may not be out of place. The enterprise of Wilkinson, the great ironmaster, thirty years before, had produced a revolution in the condition of the population. With the discovery that coal could be used for the purpose of iron manufacture, and the knowledge that rich strata of this fuel were underlying the district, a great influx of workmen from the earlier opened mines of Shropshire and Wales flocked into the town. Mine after mine and ironworks after ironworks were rapidly opened, but the news of the incredible wages to be earned caused the labour market to more than keep pace with the demand. The population consequently rose in twenty years from a little over five thousand to the figures quoted above—being an increase of two hundred and thirty per cent.

In 1831, the population had increased to 14,492. In 1851, in spite of the terrible cholera visitations of 1832 and '49, when over 1,000 persons died, the population increased to 24,420. In 1861 it reached 24,762, in 1871, 26,400; since that time it has decreased to a little over 24,000, owing to the flooding of the mines, and the decay of the iron trade. In the latter end of the last century and early part of the present, the town was noted for gangs of 'coiners.' To such an extent was 'coining' carried on that detectives (then commonly called Robin Redbreasts, from the red waistcoats that they wore) were sent down from the Home Office, on several occasions, to effect the capture of the 'coiners.' More than one unlucky member of these gangs paid the extreme penalty of the law for his crime. In the old town documents there are several entries on this subject, and in the Workhouse Register for Sept. 18, 1807, we find the following :—

"John Davies, the old money maker, as I have been told, came into the Workhouse on Friday night for relief."

Some of the older inhabitants still remember strange tales of these men; of their daring, and of their narrow escapes. So keenly were they watched, however, that most, or all of them left the town and sought a safer asylum.

During the Napoleonic wars, Bilston displayed much patriotism. In 1803 a volunteer corps was formed, composed of the principal gentry and tradesmen to the number of 200 of all ranks. Mr. Rowley, a gentleman then residing in a house on Swan Bank—which subsequently became Cross's Bank, and later on the offices of the Bilston Township Commissioners—and Mr. Silvester, a gentleman then residing in a house opposite the present Market Hall, were appointed captain and lieutenant respectively; Mr. Samuel Proud, proprietor of the Bilston Lunatic Asylum, was major, and Mr. Shale, of the King's Head Inn, Broad Street, colour-sergeant. The corps boasted a regular band of fifers and drummers, and the drill ground was a field called in the old overseers' books, "Wednesbury field," then in the occupation of Mr. James Lea, agent for Messrs. Scott and Foley. Some hundreds of pounds were collected by the inhabitants to provide uniform and other necessary requisites of military service, all the Government was called upon to do being to provide weapons and a drill instructor.

It will be news to most Bilston people to learn that the town was anciently the possessor of a famous well, dedicated to some old Saxon saint, whose identity is now difficult to prove. The well in question was known in colloquial phrase as 'Crudeley.' or 'Cruddley' well, and was situate just off Lichfield Street, near to the entrance to Proud's Lane. In mediæval times, this well was largely resorted to by, not only the townspeople, but by others from the surrounding neighbourhood, on account of its being a 'holy' well. It gradually lost its sanctity as the people grew more enlightened or less superstitious, and subsequently came under the control of the parish authorities, who kept its winding apparatus in proper repair, as is very clear from the parochial accounts. To show this more clearly, I subjoin the following items, taken from the constable's accounts for the several years mentioned therein :—

	£	s.	d.
1809.			
For repairing Cruddeley Well - - - - -	0	4	2
,, locking up the well - - - - -	0	15	0
1811.			
For locking up the well - - - - -	1	0	0

1815.	£	s.	d.
For chain and ironwork for Cruddeley Well -	3	3	4

This latter item, it is most amusing to state, became the subject of an appeal to Stafford Quarter Sessions, when Edward Wooley (the famous screw manufacturer and hero of the old story of How "Wooley lost his Watch"), John Bowen (the well-known landlord of the Angel Inn, Hall Fold), J. B. Whitehead (the blank tray manufacturer), and William Taylor (a former overseer) appealed against the legality of certain items in the accounts of the overseers, of which the repairs to Crudeley Well was one. This well continued to supply the towns-folk of the locality with water until towards 1830, when the supply ceased through the working of the mines, and the shaft was filled up. Of the origin of the name there does not seem in my mind to be much doubt. In the Saxon calendar we have a Saint Creadda, or Credda, and it was to his memory the well was, in all probability, dedicated. This well is said, on the authority of an old manuscript found among the town documents many years ago—which were, unfortunately sold as waste paper on the building of the present Town Hall !—to have borne a Latin inscription, running thus :—

Qui non dat quod habet,
Daemon infra ridet,

Which has been Englished thus :

Who does not here his alms bestow,
At him the demon laughs below.

Another famous local well is that once situate at Spring Vale, near Bilston, known at one time far and wide, as Lady Wulfruna's well. In an old document belonging to Bilston I find the following reference to it :—

"To ye South of Wolferhamtune is a famous springe called Ladie Wulfrune's Sprynge, where shee usyd to come and washe. Ye legende tells us yt ye ladie Wulfrune prayede for yt God woude endue ye well wyth powers of noe ordinarie vyrtue, inasmoche as yt it hath curyd manie, as it wer myraculouslie healynge ye lame, ye weake and impotent, and dyvers sufferyng fro mortall diseases, as manie there bee yt cann testifie."

It would be interesting and important to know the site of a well possessing such valuable powers, but though tradition has left nothing on record by which we can sufficiently localise it, its former existence is still preserved in the name of Springvale, by which the district is still known. Further, a street in Cann Lane (now Hurst Hill) lying in the direction of Springvale, at its northern end, is known by the name of Holywell Street.

The years 1815-16 were memorable ones in the commercial history of the town. The close of the Napoleonic wars by the victory at Waterloo produced a serious effect upon the trade of the town. Works, furnaces, and foundries, which had previously been employed in the manufacture of war munitions, were brought to a stand; throwing out of employment more than two thousand able-bodied men who had to seek aid from the parish. The panic which ensued was alarming. Bankrupts became numerous; most of the leading men succumbed to the fate they abhorred. Women and children cried for bread, and stout men wept because they had none to give them. The ratio of deaths increased—mainly from starvation—15 per cent. In this critical time the workmen obtained several carts, which they loaded with coals and drew to some of the large towns of the kingdom. One started for London—the men who harnessed it being determined, if possible, to acquaint the government with their critical condition; a second was taken to Manchester, and a third to Liverpool. They had each a motto "We had rather work than beg!" and they chose rather to receive voluntary contributions than beg a single penny. The two latter reached their destinations, but the first was met at St. Alban's by several government officials, who purchased their coals and persuaded them to return. Though suffering the greatest privations they did not break the peace, and the nation, to show its appreciation of their conduct, sent contributions for their relief. During this period it was computed that the failures in this district alone amounted to £1,000,000 sterling.

As the country became more settled, and the prospects of a long-continued peace certain—public confidence was gradually restored, and the arts of peace found employment for the people and bread for the hungry.

In 1816 a large number of coins, of the reigns of Elizabeth, James I and Charles I were found near Moxley. In all probability they had been buried during the civil wars, to secure them from the bands of soldiers who roamed about in search of plunder.

On February 23, 1820, Bilston was the scene of a terrible double murder—that of Maria Martin and her infant, 16 months' old, by her lover, Abel Hill. The *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, of 1820, August 2, says: "After execution, Hill's body was delivered over to Mr. Best, of Bilston, who received positive instructions from the learned judge who presided at the trial, that it should be publicly exposed and dissected, and afterwards anatomised, in order no doubt to mark the enormity of the crime for which he suffered, and to hold forth as a warning of the ignominious and untimely end at which offenders like him are destined to arrive."

The skeleton of this criminal (who displayed the most callous indifference to his fate while on the scaffold, and kicked his boots off among the crowd to give the lie to a prediction of his neighbours "that he would die in his shoes") was until two years ago, in existence, and was for a short time in the possession of the Chief Superintendent of Police, Mr. Longden.

In 1821, the New Road, now called Wellington Street, was constructed by Act of Parliament, for which purpose £3,000 was borrowed from Government, and the tolls mortgaged for the repayment thereof, the tolls being increased for the purpose of its liquidation. Previous to this improvement the old coach road was along Wolverhampton Street, down High Street, through Swan Bank, and down Bridge Street, commonly known as the "Old Road," whence it made a wide sweep to Wednesbury. By the construction of the new road a good half mile was saved, and a very handsome approach made into the town. The late Mr. Matthew Frost was the contractor. Until then the face of Wellington Street was covered with meadows and hedgerows.

On May 17, 1825, it was represented to Parliament that Bilston was one of the largest villages in England, having a population of nearly 14,000 souls, and yet it had no Market in which they might sell their wares; and the petitioners humbly

prayed that they might be permitted to hold a weekly market in a place appointed for that purpose, believing that it would conduce to the prosperity of the town. The Royal assent was accordingly given. The act also empowered the trustees to erect a Town Hall, and other public offices, as soon as the receipts were sufficiently large to enable them to do so.

Before the granting of this privilege the market was held in Church Street, and on the market day the street presented a singular and extraordinary appearance. Stalls, booths, carts, &c., were the repositories of all sorts of property, from the paraphernalia of a cheap John's establishment to the culinary utensils of a crockery-ware dealer. The noises which arose from the different vendors in this modern Babel—in which treble, bass, tenor, and other voices were mixed in admirable confusion—swelled to the doors of the old Church and there strove stubbornly for the mastery with the "organ and sweet-voiced choir."

In 1826, St. Leonard's Church was enlarged to its present size. For some years its inadequacy had been felt, owing to the extraordinary increase of the population, and as early as 1815, the preliminary step was taken for its enlargement, as the following entry in the churchwarden's accounts for that year shows :—

	£	s.	d.
"May 13. Paid for a faculty to enlarge Bilston Chapel - - - - - -	21	19	0
Expenses attending the same - - -	3	11	5

The heavy outlay involved in the enlargement deterred the inhabitants for a time from proceeding with the work. In the meantime delapidations had to be repaired. Thus in 1821, the old vane had become dangerous and a new one had to be erected, as the following entries of expenditure prove :—

1821. July 3—Paid man for taking down the eagle	1	5	0
,, ,, ,, ,, ,,	0	7	0
Sept. 17—Carriage of the eagle and old dial to Birmingham - - - - -	0	3	6
Oct. 29—Paid a man for three journeys to Birmingham, about vane - - -	0	7	6

	£	s.	d.
Nov. 17—Paid man for putting up a new vane and repairing the top of the steeple -	2	15	6
Paid man for assisting - - - -	0	6	0

In the following year these items were paid :—

For ironwork of steeple - - - - -	6	19	2
Paid for palisades to chapel - - - - -	14	11	9
Paid William Thurstans for iron palisades for chapel yard - - - - -	28	0	1½
Paid Thomas Perry for iron gates - - - -	6	3	6

The next preliminary step was the closing of the footpath through the churchyard, the proposed enlargement of the church necessitating the taking in of "the ancient and accustomed way through the burial ground." At a vestry meeting held in 1822, it was unanimously resolved that the minister and chapelwardens are hereby authorised to apply to the magistrates of the Hundred in which the township is situated for the purpose of obtaining an order for stopping up the said footway or road across the chapelyard as a public footpath. The following items appear in the accounts for that year :—

		£	s.	d.
April 17.	Expenses of John Wooley & Jos. Price, two days at Stafford to get order filed for stopping up road through the chapelyard - - - - -	1	16	2
April 18.	Paid counsel to move for ditto - -	1	3	6

In the following year the parishioners resolved to engage Mr. F. Goodwin, architect, of London, to prepare plans for the enlargement, and on Feb. 12, 1824, the plans were submitted, approved, and £30 paid to the architect for them.

At a vestry meeting held June 20, 1825, it was resolved to accept the offer of the Society for the Promoting and the Enlargement and Building of Churches, to give £550 on condition that a certain number of seats were free. That an

additional rate of 1s. in the pound for five years be levied to make up the deficiency between the above grant and the cost of the alterations, estimated at £2,600.

When the chapel was about being closed for the enlargement, notice was given on three successive Sundays, "that during the time of the rebuilding the minister had obtained permission to do duty every Sunday morning at Willenhall, where it was believed that the kindness of the inhabitants would receive into their respective pews all persons who were desirous of attending; and that during the suspension of public worship, christenings, churchings, and burials would take place every Sunday afternoon in the schoolhouse."

The whole body of the church was taken down, but the substructure of the tower up to the belfry chamber was found to be so solid that it was allowed to remain; and this accounts for the existence to-day of a portion of the fourteenth century work alluded to in a previous chapter. The contract for taking down the upper portion of the tower seems to have been separately made, judging from the following entries of expenditure:

		£	s.	d.
1827.	Paid Richard Corbett on account of taking down the belfry	60	0	0
	Ditto for his balance	43	3	0

The encroachment upon the burial ground by the enlargement caused the displacement of many bodies and remains. These were all carefully collected and buried in a large pit in the centre of the church.

The total expenditure according to the accounts exhibited at a vestry meeting held in the schoolhouse, May 27, 1828, was £8263 16s. 8d., made up as follow:—

	£	s.	d.
Produce of sale of Pews	1165	0	0
Borrowed of Edward Best	1000	0	0
,, N. Best	1000	0	0
,, Mrs. Hoskins	1000	0	0
	£4165	0	0

	£	s.	d.
Brought forward - - - -	4165	0	0
Borrowed of Wm. Banks - - - - -	1000	0	0
,, Thomas Brueton - - - - -	600	0	0
,, Thomas Smith - - - - -	700	0	0
,, Mrs. W. Banks - - - - -	700	0	0
Received from the Society for Enlarging of Churches - - - - - -	550	0	0
,, on Drawbacks - - - - -	478	0	0
,, for T. A. Proud's deposit - - -	5	0	0
,, from Joseph Price, from levies - -	33	14	3
,, due to the Bank - - - -	32	2	5
Total	£8263	16	8

The following items for the embellishment of the chapel were also produced and passed :—

	£	s.	d.
To Mr. Bucknall for his estimate of organ - -	5	0	0
,, ,, Parsons for the organ - - - - -	500	0	0
,, ,, for the cases - - - - - - -	25	0	0
,, men, 20/- ; receipt stamp, 7/6 ; postage, 1/9	1	9	3
,, Crowley, for carriage on organ - - -	23	3	6
,, Stamp for Crowley's bill - - - -	0	5	0
,, Messrs. Fogg, for chancel picture - -	72	10	0
,, Charlotte Price, overcharge - - -	0	5	0
,, Mr. Willemont, for chancel window - -	231	2	6
,, ,, Henderson, painting of the other windows	50	8	4
,, ,, Allen, for communion plate, after allowing for the old - - - -	65	0	0
,, ,, Rudge, for opening organ - - -	5	0	0
,, Messrs. Smallwood & Co., communion table	59	10	0
,, Balance in Banker's hands - - - -	14	6	2

Respecting the above expenditure for organ the following entries in the vestry book are curious.

" March 30, 1826. It was unanimously resolved to erect an organ in St. Lonard's Church, previous to its reopening, providing the purchase thereof can be accomplished by voluntary subscriptions, and that in the event of an organ being erected, Mr. Thomas Bowen be appointed organist."

"That in order to pay the organist for his services *an Annual Ball be held at Mr. John Bowen's during the Christmas Holidays*,* that the profits of such ball to the amount of £25 be considered as his salary, and that any deficiency be made up by voluntary subscriptions; and that the overplus, if there be any, be paid into the hands of the minister and churchwardens, and applied to any purpose connected with the organ as they may deem necessary!"

The following inscription appears over the main entrance to the church, on the interior:—

"This Chapel was enlarged in 1826, by which means 846 additional sittings were obtained, and in consequence of a grant from the Society for promoting the enlargement and building of Churches and Chapels, 654 of that number have been declared free, and unappropriated, for ever, and are in addition to 72 already provided.

Wm. Leigh, A.M., Worcester College, Oxon.
P. Curate. Joseph Price & Thomas Banks, Chapelwardens."

In 1825 a petition was presented to the Commissioners for building New Churches, praying that they would be pleased to erect a new church in the township, free of expense to the inhabitants, grounding the said petition on the wants of the inhabitants, and the great sacrifices they were about to make for the enlargement of St. Leonard's. In 1826 this prayer was granted, and at a vestry meeting the most grateful thanks of the inhabitants was offered to the Commissioners for their munificent grant. It was then resolved to obtain a site, the most suitable one being in Oxford Street, belonging to Messrs. Loxdale and Warren, the heirs of the Tomkys family. An application was made to them but they refused to grant the site unless the patronage of *both* churches were vested in the estate of the Tomkyses. The inhabitants

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* The writer possesses a ticket of admission for one of these Balls, held in aid of the Sunday School belonging to St. Leonard's Church, on January 6, 1824, in Mr. Bowen's Concert Room, Angel Inn, Hall Fold, under distinguished patronage.

declined to relinquish the right of presentation, and decided, therefore, to purchase a piece of land called Gozzard's Croft, the property of John Willim, Esq. This site was accordingly purchased for £950. The Church was not completed till 1830. On April 26th, that year, a Vestry Meeting was held, at which it was resolved that the necessary furniture be procured, as directed by His Majesty's Commissioners, for completing the church, and that the strictest economy be used, so as to press as little upon the inhabitants as possible, on account of the depressed state of trade, and that two levies of 1/- in the pound be specially granted for the purpose.

At the laying of the foundation stone on May 29, 1829, there was a procession of townspeople, school children, clergy, &c. The following items appear in the parish books relating thereto :—

		£	s.	d.
May 29.	Expenses of Sunday School in the procession at laying the first stone of St. Mary's, and regaling them, &c.	11	1	6
	Received from subscriptions towards this	10	19	0

The first minister was the Rev. H. S. Fletcher, who married a daughter of Mr. Job Smith Lester, japanner, of Bilston. He held the living only 3 years being elected minister of St. Leonard's in 1833, on the resignation of the Rev. W. Leigh.

The Church contains a fine altar piece, subject, "Christ crowned with Thorns," presented by Thomas Banks, Esq., on the marriage of his youngest daughter. It contains about 1,500 sittings of which 900 are free. The present Vicar is the Rev. C. Batchellor, M.A., through whose instrumentality the Church has been lately restored. The patronage was at first exercised by the Incumbent of St. Leonard's and the Bishop of the Diocese, but owing to legal difficulties of a parochial character, the patronage is now vested in the hands of the Bishop.

To a stranger the Church presents an imposing appearance (that is, to those not versed in the mysteries of architecture) and seems to outstrip, in antiquity, the more homely form of its mother, St. Leonard's. The porous nature of the stone, of which

it is built, causes it to retain every particle of soot and dust that is blown against it from the chimneys of the works and furnaces round; and this is the only ground people have upon which to rest its antiquity.

In 1826 a public meeting was held to consider the desirability of obtaining better postal accommodation; when it was resolved that a petition be presented to the Postmaster-General without delay, asking him to make Bilston a regular post-town. This does not appear to have had its desired effect, for on the 8th of May, 1829, another meeting was held, at which it was resolved that most important benefits would be derived from the possession of a regular Post Office establishment, and that the inhabitants had the strongest possible claim to such an accommodation. That the population of Bilston, when the last census was taken in 1821, amounted to 12,003, that it has been increasing ever since, and that at that time it amounted to at least 16,000. That in 1824 an Act of Parliament was obtained granting the advantages of a Public Market, and a commodious Market Place had been erected; that a regular Excise Office had been established; that the Parish Church had been lately enlarged at a cost of many thousands of pounds, and that a new chapel of ease was then in course of erection; that three mail coaches passed through the town daily, and that the commercial intercourse between Bilston and almost all parts of the United Kingdom was very great in consequence of the extensive works and manufactories in the township. That there were no less than ten different ironworks, numerous japan and tin manufactories, several iron and brass foundries, &c., and great delays at present occurred in communicating with different places. This document was forwarded to the Postmaster-General, and shortly after a regular Post Office establishment was provided.

In the year 1828, Bilston lost one of its worthies in the person of Major Proud, the proprietor of the Bilston Madhouse. For many years he was a benevolent patron of the inhabitants, by whom he was sincerely respected.

With his knowledge of mental diseases he united a remarkable kindness of disposition and urbanity of manners which served to make his establishment one of the best of its

kind. So celebrated did he become in the cure of mental diseases that many were restored to their reason who had been pronounced hopelessly insane by the most eminent practitioners. He lies buried in St. Leonard's Church, and a tablet bearing the following inscription is erected to his memory.

"This tablet was erected to the memory of Samuel Proud, Esq., who died January 7th, 1828, aged 69 years." Educated for the medical profession, he was eminently successful in the cure of insane persons, to which particular branch of study he devoted nearly the whole of his life. He was also senior major in the West Stafford Local Militia, from its formation in 1810, till his death. In his private character he was universally respected as a kind master, an indulgent parent, a most hospitable neighbour, a sincere friend, and liberal benefactor to the poor, by whom he will long be held in grateful remembrance. The Asylum stood near the entrance to the lane leading out of Wellington Street and now called Proud's Lane. It was a large square building surrounded by handsome grounds, and was first occupied as a madhouse by Mr. Samuel Proud, father of Major Proud. The elder Proud was said to be a cordwainer by trade, and was frequently lampooned by medical men for setting up as a curer of mental diseases, but the son was educated to the medical profession, of which he was an ornament.

Up till 1829, the year of the passing of Sir Robert Peel's Police Act, the only place for the confinement of prisoners was the crib in the Workhouse yard; but in that year the town was supplied with the new police, their headquarters being the "Ball Court," in Stafford Street. The high walls of the boundary still show traces of the spikes fixed to prevent the escape of prisoners.

In 1831, Bilston established--in connection with Birmingham--a political union, under the guidance of Thos. Attwood, Esq., and others.

CHAPTER XX.

The Cholera of 1832.

THE Cholera Visitation of 1832, was the most terrible and fateful event connected with the history of the town—for a parallel to which we have to go back to the Desolation of Eyam, or the Plague of London. The history of the arrival and progress of the destroyer, illustrates alike the ignorance of and indifference to the most elementary principles of sanitation. As a body the inhabitants went on their way as usual; held their cock-fights, their bull-baits, their drinking bouts, as if they had received a patent of immortality. The Asiatic nature of the disease seemed to have given them the Asiatic characteristic belief in fatalism, and they suffered accordingly. That we are not libelling the people of Bilston at this critical period, let the following extract from the parochial records bear witness.

"March 8, 1832. At a public meeting of the inhabitants held this day, it was resolved unanimously that it appears to this meeting, *that the general health of the township is so good, that there does not appear any necessity for the establishment of a Board of Health*, at least under present circumstances. That the medical gentlemen of the township be requested to give earliest information to the chairman of this meeting should the cholera morbus unhappily present itself, and that he be empowered to call a public meeting forthwith immediately on receipt of such information."

Signed, W. Leigh, &c.

In other words they were to adopt a masterly policy of inaction until the destroyer was in their midst, and then—ah, then, the cholera morbus fiend was to be served with a polite notice to quit as early as was convenient to his destroyership.

On July 23, the Cholera attacked Tipton, yet, in the face of this warning, the people of that town held their "wake," and indulged, even more freely than usual, in their wicked pursuits.

On the ever memorable August 3, it made its appearance in Bilston; its first victim being Elizabeth Dawson, of Temple Street. Immediately upon its appearance the people began to arouse themselves from their stupor, but, alas! it was too late to check, in any degree, the frightful disease. Then the authorities woke up.

The Rev. Wm. Leigh at once wrote to the Council of the Board of Health, Whitehall, for their sanction to the appointment of a Board of Health for the town. He received a reply on the 6th of August, with the Board's permission.

One of the first acts of the Board was the adoption of the following resolution :—

"That the interment of all persons dying of Cholera should take place within twenty-four hours of their decease, under a penalty of £5; but in order to encourage interment within the above limited time, the Board of Health hereby undertake to pay the cost of the coffins, together with all the burial fees, when the funeral takes place within fifteen hours after death."

During the first week, commencing August 4, and ending August 11, the number of cases had increased from 4 to 60, and the deaths from 2 to 17, daily.

At first the places of worship were opened daily and thronged with people, on whose countenances "sat pale despair." They who, perhaps, had not been in the sacred precincts of a house of prayer since childhood, now rushed in, and, with trembling lips, cried aloud for mercy. And in those holy places the bloodless, yet bloody hand of the avenger sometimes overtook them. The privilege of worship was, however, too soon denied them, for on the 19th of August notice was given to the inhabitants declaring, "that on account of the fearful disease being contagious—and nowhere more so than in crowded assemblies—it was the imperative duty of their pastor to close the Church, in accordance with the opinions of the best practical physicians of the day;" and the

notice earnestly expressed the wish that all denominations would follow the same course, firmly believing it to be the best. The 19th was, accordingly, a day of mourning and of gloom. The streets were nearly deserted, and the destroyer stalked through the town unopposed.

The cases and deaths for the second week increased as follows.

DATE.	CASES.	DEATHS.
August 12th - - -	60	17
„ 13th - - -	92	21
„ 14th - - -	92	22
„ 15th - - -	98	16
„ 16th - - -	98	18
„ 17th - - -	116	22
„ 18th - - -	116	25

The state of affairs was now terrible. Many of the inhabitants fearful for their own safety, flew from their stricken relatives who were left to die in solitude and agony. Others shut themselves up in their houses, and, fastening the doors with grim determination to shut out the destroyer, there perished—their last moments uncheered by the love of those whose presence cheers even the dark and dismal valley of the shadow of death. The few stray passengers, with pale and anxious countenances, now and again cast furtive glances at the houses—which the drawn blinds and closed shutters marked out as houses of mourning—where Rachels were weeping for their children because they were not, or sorrowing in heart for the loss of their brave supporters. They, who followed friends or relatives to the grave, often heard in the falling clods, their own death-knell. Friends buried friends, and in turn were buried by strangers. At last, terror ran so high that but for the courage of a few brave fellows, the dead would have been left to bury the dead, and the whole town would soon have become a mighty sepulchre. But while the fearful danger GENERALLY obliterated the ties of affection and friendship, there were many instances where danger drew families closer together, and heart-rending scenes were exhibited, in which rather than leave the poor stricken ones to die untended and alone, the stronger braved the pestilence and either succumbed to it or were mercifully preserved. And even in death their love was not

destroyed, for they insisted upon following their loved ones to the grave and witnessing the last earthly offices performed for the dead.

It was at length determined to hinder the people from following the dead to their place of burial, and the victims were, therefore, conveyed in a cart, which was moving day and night.

On August 19, Mr. Leigh wrote to Whitehall, earnestly soliciting medical aid, and on the 21st received the following reply—

"Whitehall, Aug. 20, 1832.

Sir,—Your letter of the 19th instant, having been laid before the Lords of the Council, as containing a distressing account of the ravages of the Cholera in the town of Bilston, I am directed by their Lordships to acquaint you that Dr. M'Cann, a medical officer of great experience in the treatment of the disease, and possessing the fullest confidence of this Board, has been ordered to proceed without delay to Bilston, and to place himself in communication with you, and the other authorities of the town, for the purpose of affording his best advice in the emergency.

Dr. M'Cann will be followed in a day or two by a younger medical gentleman, to act as his assistant.

Signed, W. L. Bathurst."

The following orders (among others) were passed at this time by the Local Board of Health.

"Ordered, that the Chairman be requested to go to Birmingham for two additional medical practitioners, and two dispensers of medicine, one of the latter having run away."

"Ordered, that the linen of persons dying of Cholera, and the sheets in which they die, be immediately burnt; with an intimation to the families that every endeavour would be made to replace them."

Statement for the third week—

DATE.	CASES.	DEATHS.
August 19th - -	122	41
„ 20th - -	122	41
„ 21st - -	134	45
„ 22nd - -	134	50
„ 23rd - -	148	50
„ 24th - -	148	46
„ 25th - -	122	36

On the 22nd of August, Frederick Charles Proctor, one of the surgeons, died. On the 23rd, Dr. M'Cann arrived from London.

On the 24th, Thomas Marson Waterhouse, another medical gentleman, died, while discharging with indefatigable zeal his arduous labours.

At this time many families left the town—business was suspended—mourners were seen on every hand—and others anxiously enquiring who were dead. Such was the malignity of the disease, that persons in good health in the morning died at noon, and slept in the grave at eventide. What sights were seen during this never to be forgotten period! The whole nation became spectators of the fearful tragedy; wild rumours were afloat; and the real state of things appeared too awful to be true.

During the third week 309 persons died of Cholera alone, out of a population of 14,500!

Mr. Leigh, in his history of the Cholera, says—"On the 22nd, the condition of Bilston had become frightful; the pestilence was literally sweeping every thing before it: neither age, nor sex, nor station, escaping. To describe the consternation of the people is impossible. Manufactories are closed, and business completely at a stand. Women seen in a state of distraction, running in all directions for medical help for their dying husbands; husbands for their wives, and children for their parents. The hearse carrying the dead to the grave without intermission. The inhabitants who possessed the means quitted their homes and fled to some purer atmosphere. The awful state of things was enough to shake the stoutest hearts, and at length I sank under it: overcome by bodily

exertion, and worn out with mental anxiety for my flock. Dr. M'Cann, and Mr. Best urged me to bed. This was a sad alternative, but my strength failed, and I had nothing left except my earnest prayers to the throne of grace in behalf of my people, myself, and all belonging to me."

The fourth week shows a change for the better in the number of cases and deaths.

DATE.	CASES.	DEATHS.
August 26th - -	122	35
„ 27th - -	116	27
„ 28th - -	116	26
„ 29th - -	118	24
„ 30th - -	118	22
„ 31st - -	120	14
September 1st - -	120	14

The following letter which appeared in the *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, August 28th, written by the Rev. William Leigh, graphically sets forth the state of the town.

"Sir,—With a heart full of anguish I send you the following statement. The pestilence continues its ravages among us in a frightful manner. Since its appearance here on the 3rd inst., up to the present hour, 565 inhabitants have been swept away, which is 1 in 26 of the whole population. Well might I implore your prayers to Almighty God for our deliverance!

Sir, my parishioners crave pecuniary aid, and as a Christian minister, I beseech all Christian people, whom God hath blessed with the means, to send us aid. As a clergyman of the Established Church, I entreat my brother clergymen to make collections for our relief in the parish churches. Our necessities are increasing every hour, and our resources are fast failing us £300 have been granted to the Board of Health out of the "poor rates," but the sum will not pay for the coffins for the dead! Nothing reigns here but want and disease, desolation and death.

Dr. M'Cann, the indefatigable physician, sent to our aid by Her Majesty's Privy Council, has made arrangements, which, under God, may benefit us. We have also received medical aid from Birmingham: we have an hospital, dispensary, a house of

recovery, and a house for the distribution of provisions to the starving and destitute, BUT ALL MUST FAIL FOR WANT OF MONEY. This, however, will not be suffered in a land of charity: to many of our neighbours we are already much indebted. Any sums remitted to me, or to Messrs. Jones, Son, and Foster, bankers, here, will be received with heartfelt gratitude. Once more I implore your readers to offer up their prayers to Almighty God for our support and deliverance. Once more I implore alms from all who have the means. I implore them thus to come and "stand between the dead and the living," that by God's mercy the plague might be stayed."

At the Wesleyan Chapel Yard four preachers were engaged at one time in addressing the living, and burying the dead, 300 of whom were here interred. The grand and sublime burial service for the victims of the pestilence, recited in the low and solemn manner the awful occasion inspired, literally thrilled the assembled people, and often in the supernatural stillness the service was interrupted by a low, deep, passionate sob, or by cries for mercy from the terror-stricken.

The Revs. William Leigh, Thomas Hall, and other ministers visited the people, and endeavoured to comfort and console them. To the lasting honour of the whole of the ministers of religion be it said, they shrank not in the hour of danger, fearless of the pestilential breath, while doing their Master's will.

The fifth week's cases and deaths were as follows :—

DATE.	CASES.	DEATHS.
September 2nd	122	12
„ 3rd	122	10
„ 4th	105	9
„ 5th	95	7
„ 6th	75	6
„ 7th	55	4
„ 8th	44	6

This decrease was in a great measure due to Dr. M'Cann, whose skilful treatment and precautions were beyond all praise. His labours were excessive, and to his exertions Bilston owes its salvation from depopulation. His memory will ever be held in

grateful remembrance by all who witnessed his kindness and indefatigable exertions. The sixth week again showed a decrease in the cases and deaths, and the people began to hope that the triumphant march of the destroyer was at last nearly stayed. The cases numbered 224, and the deaths 20.

The call for help made by Mr. Leigh was not issued in vain. Englishmen never look long on their suffering neighbours without an effort to relieve them. The cry was no sooner raised than subscriptions flowed in from all quarters; the King sharing with the peasant in one common universal sympathy; and in a short time a fund was raised amounting to £8,536. Coming in at a period when the people were in a state of semi-distraction and despair, it cheered a little the gloom that overhung each heart.

The last week (seventh) of the visitation was as follows:—

DATE.	CASES.	DEATHS.
September 16th - -	18	0
„ 17th - -	16	2
„ 18th - -	14	1
„ 19th - -	14	0
„ 20th - -	20	0
„ 21st - -	10	0

Making a total of—3568 cases and 742 deaths.

The following table shows, by comparison, the severity of the attack in this town.

TOWN.	POPULATION.	DEATHS.
Sedgley -	20,577	290
Darlaston -	6,667	68
Wolverhampton -	30,600	193
Willenhall -	6,900	8
Wednesfield -	7,000	0
Bilston -	14,492	742

On Wednesday, September 12, by notice, a day of humiliation and prayer was kept throughout the township: the shops were closed, business was suspended, and the different places of worship were crowded with people.

In Mr. Etheridge's "Memorial of the Cholera," we find the following:—"A school house was erected, called the 'Cholera School,' for teaching (free of expense) the numerous orphans.

This school was opened on the anniversary of the Cholera visitation, August 3rd, 1833, when a very interesting sight was witnessed. All the orphan children, headed by friends who had interested themselves in the movement, walked in procession through the town, each wearing a medal descriptive of the Cholera visitation. The whole assembly then attended divine service in the old Church, and the Rev. Wm. Leigh delivered a truly interesting and pathetic address, which aroused the inmost souls of his hearers, as he spoke of the scenes of blackness through which they had passed; and the solemnity of the occasion was heightened by the living mementos of the awful pestilence—the dear little orphans were gathered together—and the big tear was seen to roll down the furrowed cheeks of many present, and they retired full of gratitude that they were the spared monuments of God's tender mercy, while so many had been swept away."

Let us briefly refer to the causes which produced this high rate of mortality.

The sanitary condition of the town was deplorable. Foulness and filth were seen in the old-fashioned streets, in the low courts, and everywhere. Stagnant pools sent up their deadly vapours, sink-holes their effluvia, and wretched hovels their thrice-breathed atmosphere. Undoubtedly the chief cause of this state of things arose from the character of the people, who, brought together in great numbers by the demand for labour in the vast mines and forges of the town, were composed of the worst characters, morally and socially, that could possibly be conceived; similar to the hordes of animated life that stream into some newly found gold region. Being of degraded habits, and the houses numerically inadequate for the people's accommodation, they herded together like swine, the filth of their tenements and their persons thus giving strength to the venom of the avenger.

The newly arrived inhabitants of Bilston were of the lowest type. Their lives were devoted to vice, uncleanness, and drunkenness. In the latter they often indulged for days together—the brutal husband sometimes being joined by the degraded and immodest wife. Degraded and filthy as were the lower grades of the people, they might have taken many sanitary precautions, but

the cry was "No time!" No time? Yet for several weeks the direction of the pestilence's progress had been gradually homeward; even after the visitation at Tipton, SEVERAL WEEKS ELAPSED ERE IT REACHED BILSTON; and the cry was "No time!"

The physicians recommended some precautionary measures, but, by some strange fatuity, these directions were but little attended to. Mr. Leigh states that "the cost of the funerals (exclusive of the after expense of widows and orphans) would have permanently drained, sewered, and watered every house that was visited; that policy and pity cried aloud for street and tenement reform, and demanded the opening of those large "brick graves" called courts, alleys, and back squares, where the poor are buried alive, amid the gloom, damp, corruption, human scoria, and every other attribute of the churchyard, except its sanctity and peace."

And yet "No time" could be afforded to improve this state of things, and it was not until the first victim lay in all its hideousness, that effective measures were adopted.

CHAPTER XXI.

LOCAL TOKENS. BILSTON BOOKS AND AUTHORS.

LOCAL tokens of various denominations, both in silver and copper, were issued as early as the reign of Elizabeth, but more particularly in the middle of the seventeenth, the end of the eighteenth, and beginning of the nineteenth centuries. The issues of these coins synchronised with a scarcity of the current coin of the realm, the result of exceptional national crises necessitating abnormal expenditure, such as, in the earliest case, the naval and military expenditure arising out of the threatened invasion of England by the Spanish Armada, in the second case out of the great Civil War, and, in the latest instances, out of the enormous expenditure of the Napoleonic Wars. At these periods money became so scarce as to interfere with the ordinary trading transactions of the community, and small tokens were issued by corporations and individual traders as "necessary change" for public convenience. These "*nummorum famuli*" were issued of all shapes and sizes, one of our county tokens—a Uttoxeter one—being octagonal, and bearing different legends and devices; many of them admirably designed and of workmanship equal, and, indeed, sometimes superior to the coins issued from the mint itself. The multiplicity of their designs and legends has invested them now with interest and value in the eyes of the numismatist, and some of the rarer sorts fetch prices almost equal to their weight in gold. For the later varieties, Bilston stands almost at the head of Staffordshire towns in the issue of these semi-counterfeits; but it is not entirely without representatives of the seventeenth century issues. Boyne, in his "Provincial

Tokens of the 17th century,"—the best work of its class—gives no instance of Bilston tokens of that period, but there is now in the Wolverhampton Free Library Museum, a specimen bearing the following device and superscription.

OBVERSE. Henry Pearson. In the field a horse.

REVERSE. Of Bilston. His halfpenny, 1666. In the field the initials P. H.B.

This Henry Pearson was the landlord of the White Horse, High Street, now divided into the Black Horse and White Horse Inns. He signed for several years the chapelwarden's accounts from 1670 to 1690. In the constable's accounts for the year 1669, there is this item—

"Pd Hen: Pearson for horse hire 0 0, 0 0, 0 6"

Of the eighteenth century tokens those issued by John Wilkinson, the great ironmaster, were numerous and various. The following are in my own cabinet—

1.—OBVERSE. "John Wilkinson, Ironmaster." Bust of Wilkinson, in the centre.

REVERSE. A furnace with tilting hammer, and a man at work. In the exergue, 1787.

2.—OBVERSE. "John Wilkinson, Ironmaster." Bust of issuer in the centre.

REVERSE. A ship in full sail. In the exergue, 1788.

[This was struck to commemorate the building of the first iron boat].

3.—OBVERSE. "John Wilkinson, Ironmaster." Bust of issuer.

REVERSE. "A tilting hammer, with a forgeman at work; and at the back a pair of rolls. 1788.

4.—OBVERSE. "John Wilkinson, Ironmaster." Bust in centre.

REVERSE. "Halfpenny." In the exergue, 1790; and in the field a Vulcan at the anvil, with the masts of a vessel in perspective.

5. OBVERSE. "John Wilkinson, Ironmaster." Bust in centre.

REVERSE. "Halfpenny," 1791. In the field an emblematic figure of Invention seated, surrounded by wheels, screws, and other mechanical appliances.

6.—OBVERSE. "John Wilkinson, Ironmaster." Bust of Witkinson in centre.

REVERSE. "Incorporated by Act of Parliament." A female figure holding a harp, in the field. And 1792 in the exergue.

[This I do not think is a Bilston token, notwithstanding the bust and legend, but the medallist may have copied Wilkinson's bust in preference to making a new design].

8.—A similar token to No. 3, but issued in the year 1793.

9.—OBVERSE. "John Wilkinson, Ironmaster." Bust in centre.

REVERSE. Ship in full sail in centre. Round the rim—"Payable in Anglesea, London, or Liverpool."

There are many other tokens bearing John Wilkinson's name and bust, but as these were struck for circulation at Willey, Bersham, and Snedshill, where he also had works, I have not described them here. Most of them bear round their rims the words, "Payable at Bradley, Snedshill, Bersham, and Willey." Besides these he issued several silver tokens. The only one I have seen is the following, struck to commemorate the building of the first iron boat.

OBVERSE. "John Wilkinson, Ironmaster." In the centre a bust of Wilkinson, and the words "Fine silver."

REVERSE. A two-masted vessel in full sail. In the exergue, 1788. On the edge are the indented words, "Willey, Snedshill, Bersham, Bradley." This is more a medal commemorative than a token. Several of Wilkinson's tokens are now very scarce.

The following tokens were also issued by the several manufacturers and tradesmen whose names they bear.

1.—OBVERSE. "One Pound Note for 120 tokens, 1811. In the centre a profile facing to the right.

REVERSE. "Payable by Rushbury and Woolley, Bilston." In the field the front elevation of the Royal Exchange.

[This is the only twopenny token issued in Staffordshire, that I am acquainted with].

2.—OBVERSE. "One Penny Token, 1811." Profile in centre as above.

REVERSE. "Payable at Bilston. Royal Exchange." Elevation of Exchange in centre.

3.—An exactly similar one to this, only a halfpenny, and the words "For Public Accommodation."

4.—A similar one to No. 2, with the date 1812.

5.—OBVERSE. "One Penny Token." Bust in centre."

REVERSE. A seated figure of Commerce holding in one hand a palm branch, and in the other a branch of laurel, a shield by her side, and the legend "Commerce."

6.—OBVERSE. "One Pound Note for 240 tokens, 1811." Head in profile looking to the right.

REVERSE. "Payable by Rushbury & Woolley, Bilston." View of Royal Exchange in centre.

7.—OBVERSE. "One Pound Note for 240 tokens, 1811." Crowned and draped head of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster.

REVERSE. "Payable by Edward Beebee, Bilston." In the field a mounted Field Officer or General, with baton.

8.—A similar one to above, except that the head of John of Gaunt is crowned but undraped, and the date is 1812.

9.—OBVERSE. "One Pound Note for 240 tokens, 1813." In the field a beehive on a stand, with bees flying around, enclosed in a square.

REVERSE. "Payable by James Atherton, Bilston." In the field, three Lombardy balls.

10.—A halfpenny of above.

11.—OBVERSE. "A One Pound Note for 240 tokens," within a circle; on the field of the token—"One Penny Payable by"

REVERSE. "Samuel Fereday, Bilston, 1812."

12.—OBVERSE. Representation of three blast furnaces and engine house. In the exergue, "Priestfield Furnaces, 1811."

REVERSE. "One Penny payable at Bilston by S. Fereday." In the field and round "Bradley, Bilston, & Priestfield Collieries and Ironworks."

13.—A similar one, with smoke issuing out of the works' chimney.

14.—OBVERSE. "T. & F. Lewis, Tea Dealers, Church Street, Bilston." Box in centre.

REVERSE. Ditto, with coffee mill in centre, "One Farthing."

15.—OBVERSE. "A. Ellis, Tea Dealer, Bilston."

REVERSE. "Genuine Tea Warehouse." A tea canister in centre.

Of silver tokens issued I have also in my possession the following.

1.—OBVERSE. In the field the arms of the borough of Stafford (a castle between five lions passant guardant). Legend: "Bilston Silver Token Sixpence."

REVERSE. In the field, surrounded by a Garter, the words "Payable by Rushbury and Woolley." On the Garter itself, "Commercial change, 1811." In the outer circle, "One Pound Note for 40 tokens.

2.—An exactly similar design, with the words "Bilston Silver Token, One Shilling," and "One Pound Note for 20 tokens."

Some of these tokens were struck by Edward Thomason (afterwards Sir Edward) of Birmingham, but most of Wilkinson's were struck at the famous Soho factory. A large number found their way to Wolverhampton and places adjoining, so many, in fact, that the tradesmen of Wolverhampton called a meeting on Dec. 12, 1811, and resolved—"That the great influx of silver and copper coins issued by individuals, companies, and corporations has become a serious public grievance, and we do hereby agree with each other to discontinue to receive them in payment from this time." It was also resolved, "That the overseers of the poor be requested to make application for such further supplies of three shilling and eightpenny Bank of England tokens as they may think necessary, and that all expenses of such application be defrayed by the town."

This stirred up the Bilston people who were largely convenienced by these tokens, or at least the manufacturers were, so they held a meeting and resolved—"That this town and neighbourhood, having derived great advantage from the silver and copper coins issued by Samuel Fereday, Esq., and Messrs. Rushbury and Woolley, any attempt to impede the circulation thereof will be impolitic and materially prejudicial to commercial intercourse in this town and neighbourhood." Very naturally after such a strong expression of opinion the meeting resolved further "That we sanction, encourage, and promote the circulation of the above-mentioned tokens."

Wolverhampton was not to be outdone, so the advertisement of this resolution was immediately answered by another advertisement from the shopkeepers of Wolverhampton announcing their adherence to their resolution in public meeting, that they would neither pay nor receive such tokens, with a postscript stating that Rushbury and Woolley's silver shillings were worth only eightpence farthing, and that Samuel Fereday's copper pennies ran two shillings and three halfpence to the pound, the price of copper being only one shilling and a halfpenny a pound. The hostility of the Wolverhampton tradesmen went on for some years, but in 1817, they induced E. J. Littleton, Esq., one of the county members, to introduce a bill to prevent the issuing and circulation of copper tokens. On its introduction petitions from Wolverhampton, Wednesbury, Dudley, and other places, were sent up in its favour, and as the result the bill passed on June 27, 1817, making it illegal to circulate or pass tokens after the 1st of January, 1818, exception being allowed in case of public authorities, such as overseers and corporations, who had the time extended to 1820 for calling in their tokens.

The following brief notices of books written by Bilston authors, or printed in Bilston (a subject fully treated in my "Bibliography of Wolverhampton") will interest some readers. Bilston people have never displayed any great intellectual activity; their contributions to national literature have been meagre and unimportant. For a brief period many of its natives were sent to the Universities, and became priests and clergymen, but, with few exceptions, they left behind them no crystallizations of brain force in the shape of books or pamphlets. The earliest and rarest Bilston book is one written by John Robyns, of Bilston, a learned mathematician, born at the close of the fifteenth century, who died Canon of Windsor in the reign of Queen Mary, 1558. This book, which Anthony Wood says is entitled—

"De Portentosis Cometus," is so extremely rare that he had never seen a copy of it, nor had any of the learned libraries any better fortune, may now be safely assumed to be lost.

The next earliest productions are the following:—

1.—"A Faithful Relation of the proceedings of the Catholic gentlemen with the Boy of Bilson; shewing how they found him, on what terms they

meddled with him, how farre they proceeded with him and in what case, and for what cause they left to deale further with him. By Thomas Wheeler. 1620."

2.—"The Boy of Bilson; or, a True Discovery of the late notorious impostures of certain Romish Priests, in their pretended exorcisme or expulsion of the deville out of a young boy, named William Perry, sonne of Thomas Perry, of Bilston, in the County of Stafford, yeoman. Upon which occasion hereunto is permitted a brief theological discourse by way of caution, for the more easy discerning of such Roman spirits, and judging of their false pretences, both in this and the like practices. At London: Imprinted by F. K. for William Blount, 1622."

An account of this imposture is given in a previous chapter. The next volume which for the following reasons I claim as a Bilston book, bears this title:—

"Poems on several occasions. *Parce tamen—Tibuli.* Wolverhampton: Printed and sold by G. Smart; W. Longman, Paternoster Row; and Mr. Dodsley, Pall Mall, London, 1769. 4to."

The author was the Rev. Thomas Moss. There has always been considerable doubt respecting the birthplace of this noted poet, but from researches I have made I have no hesitation in asserting that he was born in or near Bilston. The registers of St. Leonard's Church, in this town, show that there were several branches of the Moss family residing here, and taking a prominent part in public affairs for two centuries or more. One entry I give:—"August 18th, 1708, Sarah, ye daughter of Samuel and Eleanor Duce (baptized) by Mr. Moss, and John, ye son of William and Eliz. Turton, privately baptized by Mr. Moss, I (the curate, Ric Ames) being then att Oxford, to attend ye Dean of Windsor." This Mr. Moss was vicar of Walsall from 1708 to 1733, and grandfather, as I take it of the poet. Different members of the Moss family frequently signed the chapel-wardens' accounts during the eighteenth century. The poet was educated at the Wolverhampton Grammar School, and afterwards entered himself at Emanuel College, Cambridge, taking his B.A. degree in 1761, being head of the Junior Optimes for that year. He wrote several of his best poems while at college. He was presented to the living of Brierley Hill, in this county, in the year 1767, and afterwards became domestic chaplain to the Marquess of Stafford at Trentham. In 1769, he entered into communication with Mr.

George Smart respecting the publication of his poems, among which was "The Beggar's Petition." As the result of these negotiations an edition was printed mostly without the author's name; but twenty copies were printed with Mr. Moss's name, for the purpose of distribution among his private friends.

A second edition appeared in 1827, 8vo, edited by B. Guy Phillips, of the Inner Temple.

The next volume, in point of time, is

"An Essay on Archery, describing the Practice of that Art in all Ages and Nations. By Walter Michael Moseley. Worcester: Printed by J. & J. Hall, 1792. 8vo."

I give this author here as belonging to Bilston because, though born in Wolverhampton, he was the son of a Bilston man, and a direct descendant of the Bilston and Mollesley families. He was first educated at a private school in St. James' Square, and was afterwards sent to Edinburgh to complete his education. Here he became a well-read classical scholar, being well acquainted with Greek, Latin, French, and Italian. He also devoted much of his time to a study of chemistry, and on his return to his native county assisted the famous Wedgwood in his laboratory. It was while enjoying a few months' retirement at his father's house at Glasshampton that he wrote his book on "Archery," in which he has shown a thorough knowledge of the subject, a varied acquaintance with classical literature, and a bowman's real enthusiasm for an ancient weapon of war, sport, and amusement. He was a member of the "Staffordshire Bowmen" Society, which used to practice in Needwood Forest, close to the residence of the famous author of a poem of that name. He married a lady who was fond of botany and he not only took a great interest in that fascinating pursuit, but showed equal enthusiasm for archæology, astronomy, &c. He finally took up his residence at his seat at Winterdyne, near Bewdley, where he died in 1827. He was buried in Enville Church, where his parents also repose.

The earliest "Bilston printed" pamphlet I have met with is the following:—

"A clear and comprehensive Explanation of the Holy Trinity, which for nearly fifteen hundred years has lain concealed, proving from Scripture and reason that Jesus Christ is the only true God, in one glorified Divine Person. By J. C. Hill. Bilston: Printed by S. Bassford, 1804. 8vo., pp. 32."

In the year 1829 appeared a small pamphlet, now of extreme rarity, entitled

"The Real Wretches: a True Picture. The 1st Epistle of Timothy, chap. iv, v. 2.

Beneath the grass and shrubs
A snake disclosed its crested front,
And spit its venom forth,
But hurtless I escaped
Th' intended venom. *Dr. Moore.*

Printed by Francis Nokes, Bilston. 12mo., pp. 12."

This is a vigorously written satire.

Another extremely scarce pamphlet bears this title :—

"Description of Mr. Rowley's Picture of Paradise Regained, taken from the last, but memorable, words of our Lord, "It is finished"; wherein are combined with the important historical representation of that most extraordinary event, the evidence and tenets of Christianity, according to the Articles and Homilies of the Church of England. Bilston: F. Nokes, 1824. 8vo, pp. 16.

The author of this pamphlet and painter of the picture was a native of Bilston, who, fancying himself a great artist, painted an immense canvas, which he conveyed to London to exhibit to the admiring gaze of art critics and connoisseurs. He called in the president of the Royal Academy to see his production before exhibiting it to the public. On seeing it the President of the R.A. said, "Yes! It's a large picture—a very large picture indeed. Good day, Mr. Rowley." This significant criticism shattered the painter's hopes.

The next work to be described is the outcome of the fatal Cholera Visitation of 1832, and bears this title—

"An Authentic Narrative of the Melancholy Occurrences at Bilston, in the County of Stafford, during the awful visitation in that town by Cholera, in the months of August and September, 1832; to which is added the proceedings of the Local Board of Health; a List of Contributors for the Relief of the Inhabitants, together with the application of the money, and other interesting particulars. By the Rev. W. Leigh, M.A., Worcester College, Oxford, and Incumbent of Bilston. Wolverhampton: W. Parke, High Street, 1832. Dedicated to the generous benefactors, who came forward so promptly and so charitably to the relief of the Inhabitants. 8vo., pp. 76, appendices 70.

The Rev. W. Leigh came to Bilston in 1802, as curate, and remained so until the year 1813, when a vacancy occurred in the

incumbency, he was elected by popular vote to the vacant living. He discharged his duties to the satisfaction of his parishioners, particularly during the Cholera visitation, so much so, indeed, that in 1833, he was presented with a splendid service of plate as a token of admiration for his conduct. In 1834 he was appointed to the Government living of Pulham, in Norfolk, where he died on April 12th, 1858, aged eighty years. He was first in all movements for the social, political, and religious improvement of the people. His account of the Cholera visitation is admirably written, and without striving after sensational effect he has managed to give us a plain, unvarnished, but harrowing story, which cannot be read now without a pang.

The next Bilston writer was Joseph Price, who was worthy of special notice because he was a printer, and personally superintended the printing of his own productions. He was born in Bilston in 1775, and died in April, 1849, aged 74 years. He was for many years one of the churchwardens of St. Leonard's Church, took an active part in all public affairs, and was regarded somewhat as a village oracle. He wrote :—

"An Historical Account of Bilston, from Alfred the Great to 1831, particularly of the Ancient Chapel, the Dissolution thereof, and its Re-establishment. Contests for the Incumbency, &c., &c. By Joseph Price. *Mos Legem Regit.* Bilston: Printed by and for the Author, 1835. pp."

This is a creditable local book. The author, it is true, commences like the famous Irish historian, O'Flaherty, with the creation of the world, and deals with many subjects not legitimately associated with his subject, but the book, nevertheless, contains much valuable information, and is a desirable one for a local collector. It is now scarce. Mr. Price also wrote and printed :—

1.—"A Summary of Mr. Leigh's History of the Cholera in Bilston, in 1832. Stitched, price 6d. 1833."

2.—"A Narrative of the Proceedings relative to the intended Election of a Minister to succeed the Rev. W. Leigh, to the Incumbency of St. Leonard's Church, Bilston. By Joseph Price, Bilston. Printed by J. Price, 1836. 12 pages, 8vo."

A son of this author—George Price, of Wolverhampton—has also written several books, including a large and important "History of Locks and Keys."

A small pamphlet of 28 pages appeared in 1832, the title page of which gives it a claim to be regarded as one of the "curiosities of literature."

"A Cap of Grey Hairs for Young Travellers: or, a few Poems on various subjects; with a Letter to His Majesty; and the Believer's Rich Bank; instructions for the young and consolations for the aged; the glory of God and your soul's welfare, is the sincere desire of your humble servant James Lane. F. Nokes, Printer, Bilston."

Two small pamphlets come next. They were written by Mr. William Hackett, printer, of Bilston, a Wesleyan local preacher for more than 50 years.

1.—"A Letter to the Inhabitants of Sedgley, in answer to a Sermon by the Rev. C. Girdlestone, entitled "A Plea for Unity." By a Dissenter. W. Hackett, printer, 1835. 12mo., pp. 12."

2.—"A Collier's Directory."

In point of time the following lectures and pamphlets come next—

1.—This is a small volume of a controversial nature, the character of which may be gleaned from the title which is as follows:—"The substance of a series of Lectures on the Perpetuity and perpetual visibilty of the Church of Christ. Delivered by the Rev. G. Fox, at the Catholic Chapel, Bilston. Birmingham, 1839, 12mo., pp."

2.—"Socialism Exposed; or the Book of the 'New Moral World' examined and brought to the test of fact and experience. By Joseph Mather. With an appendix. 1839. 8vo., pp. 36."

The writer of this pamphlet, which is a scathing and able criticism of Owen's transcendental theories, was at the time of its publication, Congregational minister of Bilston. While here he also wrote and published two addresses on Church Rates, the second of which I have obtained, bearing the following title:

3.—"Church Rates Indefensible. A second Address to the Inhabitants of Bilston, against all compulsory exactions for the support of religion, and a reply to the addresses of the Rev. H. S. Fletcher, to the working classes on that subject. By Joseph Mather. Bilston, 1839. pp. 20."

The contest over Church Rates raged fiercely in Bilston, at this time, and many squibs, handbills, and addresses were issued on both sides. So much harm indeed was done to the Establishment in the neighbourhood by the indiscretion of its defenders that it

was at last felt necessary to withdraw from the position taken up by the National Church supporters, and it was on this account that the Rev. C. Girdlestone, of Sedgley, preached his sermon in St. Mary's Church, Bilston, on "Church Rates Lawful, but not Expedient."

Another local pamphlet is the following:

"Report of the First Annual Dinner of the Bilston Operative Conservative Society, which was held in a marquee erected in the Market Place, Bilston, on Friday, August 7th, 1840. With an Account of the Riot and Interruption on the part of the Radicals. Birmingham: T. Ragg and Co., 1840. 16mo., pp. 24.

This dinner was attended by Viscount Ingestre, M.P., Messrs. J. Loxdale, W. Baldwin, G. B. Thorneycroft, Walter Williams, the Rev. J. B. Owen, and other well-known local Conservatives. While the meeting was proceeding a large crowd of people assembled outside the market gates, forced its way into the market, and at once stormed the marquee. The diners were roughly handled and driven away, much damage being done to the dinner services, glass, &c., and several persons injured. A large body of police at last arrived and dispersed the mob, but no attempt was made to continue the meeting afterwards.

An author of superior mental calibre comes next in the person of the Rev. J. B. Owen, an able preacher, lecturer, and author, was the son of the Mr. Jacob Owen, of Bilston, said to have been one of the trustees of the first Wesleyan Chapel, and signed the deed in 1784. The son, J. B. Owen, was born in Portsmouth, where he was educated before being sent to the University of Cambridge. His first curacy was that of Walsall Wood, to which he was appointed in 1834. While here he wrote:

"Six plain Sermons on the Sabbath, by the Rev. Joseph B. Owen, B.A., of St. John's College, Cambridge, and Curate of Walsall Wood, Staffordshire. London, 1835. Dedicated to the Very Rev. George Davys, D.D., Dean of Chester. 12mo., pp. 171.

In the year 1836, he was appointed to the living of St. Mary's, Bilston, where he soon distinguished himself in his parochial duties, and by the eloquence of his preaching. In 1837 he published:—

"An Address to the Inhabitants of St. Mary's Church, below the Brook, Bilston. W. Parke, Wolverhampton, 1837. 16mo., pp. 16.

Mr. Owen was elected shortly after on the Wolverhampton Board of Guardians, over which body he presided as chairman for fourteen years. In the year 1847, he wrote :—

"Home: its associations, influences, and prospects, with portraits, narratives, and statistics. A Lecture delivered before certain Literary Institutes in Stourbridge, Birmingham, Bilston, Walsall, Wolverhampton, Darlaston, Wednesbury, West Bromwich, Stafford, Bridgnorth, Brewood, &c. By the Rev. J. B. Owen, M.A., Incumbent of St. Mary's, Bilston, and published at the request of most of these institutions. Wolverhampton: T. Simpson. 1847. 8vo., pp. 28."

This is an eloquent tribute to the sacredness of home, and the responsibility resting upon all to secure its welfare and happiness. His sketches of character are bold, spirited, and faithful. In the year 1847, he wrote :—

"Infallibility. A Sermon preached in St. Leonard's Church, Bilston, being the third of a series by various clergymen on the Creed of Pope Pius IV. T. Simpson, Wolverhampton. 1849."

During the next two or three years Mr. Owen published the following pamphlets, all of them ably written, several of them being now scarce :—

1.—"Popery, considered in connection with our National History. Wolverhampton: T. Simpson, 1850. 8vo., pp. 40."

2.—"Six Sermons on Confirmation, preached at St. Mary's, Bilston. 12mo., T. Simpson, Wolverhampton."

3.—"The Practical Use of the Doctrine of the Trinity. A Sermon preached in St. George's Church, Wolverhampton. T. Simpson, 1850. 8vo."

4.—"A Sermon preached at the Collegiate Church of Wolverhampton, before the Mayor and Corporation, on Sunday, May 4th, 1851, on the death of the late G. B. Thorneycroft, Esq., together with an Address to the Board of Guardians, and Memoirs of the deceased. Wolverhampton: T. Simpson. 8vo., pp. 28."

5.—"A Sermon preached before Her Majesty's Judges of Assize at St. Mary's Church, Stafford, on Tuesday, March 14th, 1851. By the Rev. J. B. Owen, M.A., Vicar of St. Mary's, Bilston, and Chaplain to the High Sheriff, on the occasion of the opening of the Assize. Wolverhampton: T. Simpson. Dedicated to John Barker, Esq., High Sheriff of the County. 8vo."

6.—"A Pastor's Reflections on a Visit to the Great Exhibition. A Sermon preached at St. Mary's, Church, Bilston, and St. George's Church, Wolverhampton. T. Simpson, 1851. 8vo."

7.—"Health: a Lecture delivered before various literary institutions, 1851. T. Simpson, Wolverhampton."

8.—"Mendicity; its Evils and Tricks exposed. A Lecture. T. Simpson, Wolverhampton. 1852."

9.—"Rabbinism, the Type of Romanism. A Lecture. T. Simpson, Wolverhampton. 1852."

10.—"English Charities and Social Resources; with Episodical Sketches of the "Almshouse," "the Poor House," "the School House," and "your own House." A Lecture. By the Rev. J. B. Owen, M.A. Wolverhampton: T. Simpson. 1852. 8vo., pp. 24."

11.—"The Social and Religious Blessings of the Reformation. A Lecture. By the Rev. J. B. Owen, M.A., of St. John's College, Cambridge, Incumbent of St. Mary's, Bilston. 1845. pp. 28."

During these years Mr. Owen was gaining wide fame as a popular lecturer, his style being terse, graphic, and humorous, with a freedom of delivery and aptness of illustration which commanded admiration. In 1852, he wrote :—

"The Pottery Schoolmaster. A brief Biographical Sketch of Silas Even; containing Hints on the subject of communicating Instruction in Parochial and other Schools, &c. By the Rev. J. B. Owen, M.A., vicar of St. Mary's, Bilston. J. Hildreth and Son, Wolverhampton. 1852. 12mo., pp. 367. 2nd edition, 1854."

In the year 1854, Mr. Owen accepted the living of St. Jude's, Chelsea, and on leaving Bilston he was presented with a magnificent service of plate of the value of £1,000, as a tribute to his abilities and services. In the year 1856, he edited an edition of "Romaine's Life, Walk, and Triumph of Faith," and also wrote :—

"A Memoir of the late G. B. Thorneycroft, Esq., of Wolverhampton, by the Rev. J. B. Owen, M.A., Incumbent of St. John's, Bedford-row, London.—Wolverhampton: T. Simpson. 1856. 12mo., pp. 315."

This is a well-written account of the career of the first Mayor of Wolverhampton, whose force of character, and integrity of conduct raised him to the proud position of king of the iron trade. In 1861, he wrote a preface to "Black Diamonds, or the Gospel in a Colliery District," and in 1866 :—

"Fenians, Informers, and Habeas Corpus, with frontispiece of Blarney Castle."

Besides these he was author of—

"The South Staffordshire Primer, or Book of First Lessons for Children. 12mo., pp. 28."

"Fragments of a Sermon preached on the occasion of the Death of the Rev. J. A. Baxter, late incumbent of Christ Church, Coseley, Staffordshire. Bilston: F. Nokes, 8vo., pp. 22."

Mr. Owen died in the year 1873, in which year his son published the following memorial volume :—

"Lectures and Sermons, &c. By the Rev. Joseph Butterworth Owen, M.A., vicar of St. Jude's, Chelsea, formerly Vicar of St. Mary's, Bilston. Together with a brief Memoir of his Life. By his Son, Edward Annesley Owen, M.A., of the Inner Temple, Barrister-at-Law. London: W. Mackintosh. 1873. 8vo."

A volume may be appropriately mentioned here which attracted much attention. It has now become very scarce, especially the large paper edition, of which but few were issued. It bears this title :—

"A Course of Sermons on the Creed of Pope Pius IV., preached at Bilston, in February, March, April, and May, 1840. By Fourteen Clergymen of the Church of England, with copious Notes and Appendices. Wolverhampton: T. Simpson. 1841. 8vo., pp. 660."

A scarce local sermon by a clergymen, whose career was an unfortunate one, must be here described :—

"A Sermon on the Duty and Importance of Family Religion, preached in St. Leonard's Chapel, Bilston, July 5, 1840. By the Rev. H. S. Fletcher, Incumbent, and published by request of the congregation. Bilston: F. Nokes. 1840. 8vo., pp. 18."

A valuable book which claims Bilston for its birth-place, is entitled :—

"The Wanderings of a Pen and Pencil. By F. P. Palmer and A Crowquill. London: Jeremiah How. 1846. pp. 375."

Mr. F. P. Palmer ("The Pen") was for some years assistant surgeon to Dr. Cooper, of Bilston, whose sister he subsequently married. He made the acquaintance of Alfred H. Forrester ("Crowquill") who frequently visited Bilston, as a friend. It was while on one of his visits that the volume was planned, and partly written, and illustrated the excursions to the various places of interest in the district being arranged in Dr.

Cooper's house each night. Palmer was educated at Sedgley Park School, and died at Walsall, October 15th, 1872, aged 64 years. He was collaborateur with Crowquill in a number of volumes of Fairy Tales for children.

The Rev. Charles Lee, Vicar of Bilston, one of the ablest of our local clergymen, is the author of the following sermons amongst others.

1.—"The Deadly Poison of Sin. A Sermon preached in St. Mary's Church, Bilston, by the Rev. Charles Lee, M.A., Vicar, on the Sunday evening after the execution of William Palmer, at Stafford, for the murder of John Parsons Cook, at Rugeley. Published by special request. 1856."

2.—"The Eclipse and the Solar System. A Sermon by the Rev. Charles Lee, M.A., Vicar of St. Mary's, Bilston. Preached on Sunday evening, March 14th, 1857."

3.—"A Sermon to Ironmasters and others, on the Sins of the Iron Trade. Preached by the Rev. Charles Lee, M.A., Vicar of St. Mary's, Bilston, on Sunday, January 17, 1858, and printed by request of several members of the congregation. "How constantly are individuals pronounced 'respectable' when, if reference were had to their character, they would be entitled to anything but respect." *Mammon p. 91.* 1858."

4.—"Freemasonry, its Antiquity and Excellence. A Sermon delivered before the Very Worshipful Provincial Grand Master, Officers and Brethren of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Staffordshire, May 17, 1878, at St. Mary's Church, Stafford, by Bro. the Rev. Charles Lee, M.A., vicar of Bilston, Provincial Grand Chaplain and W. M. of the Lodge of Honour, No. 526, Wolverhampton; with Notes critical and historical. Wolverhampton. 1878."

A small volume of poems of some merit appeared in 1857, under the following title :—

"The Home Wreath, and other Poems. By Harriet Nokes, Bilston. F. Nokes, Church Street. 1857."

The writer is sister of the present postmaster of Bilston.

Another Bilston poet was one Mr. Frederick Price, who was born in this town, on March 14, 1804. He was apprenticed to a printer, and for some years was a compositor on the *Staffordshire Advertiser.* He afterwards set up as a printer in Birmingham, and printed a number of children's books, one of which, "Little Jane, the Cottage Girl," had a large sale. In 1859,

he published a small 12mo. of 104 pages, with the modest title of "Rustic Rhymes; by Frederick Price, compositor." A daughter of his was married to Dr. J. A. Langford, of Birmingham. Mr. Price died March 11, 1884, aged 80 years.

Another small volume of poems, by a Bilston man, appeared in 1858, with this title:—

"The World's Charity, and other Poems. By George A. H. Eades. "Poetry is not a thing of form, but an expression of the life within us." G. Sand: Wolverhampton. 1858."

I now come to a local celebrity, the late Samuel Griffiths, a native of Bilston, who was apprenticed to a chemist. When out of his time he went into business as a manufacturing chemist, and having made money set up as a bill discounter and banker in Wolverhampton. He subsequently went into the iron trade, and became a prominent member of that trade. In 1861, on the elevation of Sir Richard Bethel to the Woolsack, he aspired to Parliamentary honours, as representative of the borough of Wolverhampton. His opponents were Mr. T. M. Weguelin, and Mr. A. Staveley Hill, Q.C., the polling resulting as follows:—Weguelin, 1,363; Griffiths, 772; Hill, 665. In 1862, during the great lock-out of ironworkers, Mr. Griffiths, who was then very popular with the working classes, used his good offices on behalf of the men, and succeeded in bringing about a reconciliation. Soon after, Mr. Griffiths met with commercial disasters, which were the cause of his leaving the district. He went to Winchelsea, where he was made a Baron of the Cinque Ports. Subsequently he removed to London, where he carried on Griffiths' *Iron Trade Circular,* which he afterwards merged into the *London Iron Trade Exchange.* He was a man of great natural abilities, who believed thoroughly in himself—a quality which is usually a constituent of greatness. "In the time of his prosperity," says one estimate of his character, "his liberality was unstinted, and he bore the reverses which fell upon him in later life with a good deal of quiet dignity." Among his productions are the following:—

1.—"Medical Responsibility. Griffiths v. Walford. Tried at the Guildhall County Court, London, Friday, July 13, 1849. Wolverhampton: T. Simpson, Market Place. 1849. pp. 16. *Rare.*"

2.—"A Tabulated List of all the Blast Furnaces of Great Britain. Reprinted from the Staffordshire Iron Trade Circular. By Samuel Griffiths, metal broker. Jan. 1, 1862. 8vo."

3.—"Griffiths' Guide to the Iron Trade of Great Britain, with plates and illustrations. Contains an elaborate review of the Iron and Coal Trades for the year. Addresses and names of all Ironmasters; List of Blast Furnaces, Iron Manufactories, and other statistics and information respecting iron and coal, which may be useful to merchants. bankers, brokers, coal owners, and ironmasters. By Samuel Griffiths, editor of *The London Iron Trade Exchange.* London: published for the Proprietor. 1873. Frontispiece of Earl Granville's Shelton Furnaces and Collieries, Staffordshire. 8vo., pp. 316. Dedicated to Sir Sidney Hedley Waterlow, Bart., then Lord Mayor of London."

The next Bilston author is Mr. David Bailey. He was born in Broad Lanes, in Sedgley parish, but has for many years past been master of a private school in Bilston. He was one of the earliest of Mr. Pitman's phonetic reporters, and is not only an accomplished shorthand writer, but an enthusiastic spelling reformer. When the evils of the Truck System were attracting Parliamentary attention he wrote the following pamphlet, in which the evils of the system are graphically described, and practical remedies suggested :—

"The Truck System: a Book for Masters and Workmen. By David Bailey. London: Fred. Pitman. 1859. 8vo., pp. 24."

The pamphlet, which is now scarce, attracted much attention, and undoubtedly deepened the local agitation against the system, so ruinous in most instances to the working classes. His other works are the following :

"Exercises in Spelling and Pronunciation, on an entirely new plan, comprising selections of pieces from the best standard authors, phonetically expressed. By David Bailey, author of "The Truck System, 1861."

"The Testimony of Jesus, or Plain Proofs from the Old and New Testaments compared, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only God of Heaven and Earth, &c. Londod: F. Pitman. 1884. Printed in the Phonetic Spelling."

A small pamphlet of the Truck System, by an anonymous author, is the following :—

"A Catechism relating to Clerical Magistrates and the Anti-Truck Act. Printed by F. Nokes," as is also the following:—

"Kate Hamilton, or Profession and Principle. A book for the young. By Rosa Gaythorn. 1859."

The Rev. H. W. Holland was one of the wisest, ablest, and broadest-minded ministers of the Wesleyan connexion. I speak in the past tense, for, alas, he has journeyed to that bourne whence no traveller returns. I include him among the minor local authors, then, out of no disrespect, but because he published while here only a sermon. He was stationed at Ettingshall—then part of the Wolverhampton Wesleyan circuit—for three years, and was beyond question an original and powerful preacher, an advanced educationalist, a firm believer in a free, national, unsectarian system of education, supplemented by religious tuition undertaken by the sects themselves. Had he lived he would in all probability have risen to the highest post in Methodism, and certainly would have kept up its high reputation. While here he wrote the following:—

"A Sermon on the Death of H.R.H. Prince Albert, preached in the Wesleyan Chapel Bilston, on Sunday evening, December 22nd, 1861, by the Rev. H. W. Holland. "God save the Queen." Wolverhampton: Printed and sold by G. Williams and Co., Queen Street. 1861. 8vo., pp. 12."

While stationed at Leeds some years afterwards he wrote an able book on the Education Question, under this title:—

"Proposed National Arrangements for a System of Primary Education. By the Rev. H. W. Holland. 1870. Post 8vo."

A sermon by the Rev. H. F. Newbolt, vicar of St. Mary's, comes next, with this title:—

"A Sermon on the Fatal Accident at Millfields, Bilston, preached by the Rev. H. F. Newbolt, M. A., Vicar of St. Mary's, Bilston, on Easter Sunday, April 20, 1862, and printed at the request of the Vestry Meeting, held on Monday, April 21st."

This deserving clergyman died May 29th, 1866. The following pamphlet relates to that sad event.

"Quiet Sunset. A brief Memoir of the Rev. H. F. Newbolt, Vicar of St. Mary's Bilston. "His sun has gone down while it was yet day." Walsall. 1866."

Mr. G. T. Lawley is a native of Bilston, and was for many years a member of the literary staff of the *Wolverhampton Chronicle* and *Midland Counties' Express*. He is the author of a long series of articles in the *Birmingham Daily Post* and

Midland Counties' Express, on the "Past Manners and Customs of Staffordshire." He was editor of the *Bilston Mercury* during the whole time that paper was in existence, and in which paper appeared his story, "The Demon Marksman." He is also author of a serial story which appeared in the *Midland Counties' Express*, entitled "The Locksmith's Apprentice," a tale of Old Willenhall; and was editor of "The Bilston Magazine," printed by Hildreth and Chambers, Wolverhampton, 1866, now extremely scarce. His separate publications are :—

1.—"A History of Bilston, by G. T. Lawley, Bilston. Price and Beebee, Market Place. 12mo., limp cloth, pp. 90. 1868."

2.—"The Visitor's Guide to Wolverhampton, containing a Map of the Borough, showing the routes to the railway stations and to the Show and trial grounds of the Royal Agricultural Society. With illustrations of the public buildings, &c. Wolverhampton: Barford and Newitt. 1871. 12mo., p. 53."

3. "The Bibliography ef Wolverhampton. A record of local books, authors, and booksellers. Bilston: Price and Beebee, 1890.

The first of these volumes is now very scarce, only a limited number being printed.

The following complete the Bibliography of the town, with few exceptions :—

1.—"The First Lecture on the Bible, a reply to the Rev. Dr. McCave, Roman Catholic Priest, of Bilston. By the Rev. John Williamson, B.A., of St. Martin's, Bradley, Bilston. 1867."

2.—"A Bright Light in a Dark Place, or eminent piety in the Black Country, as exemplified in the life of Mrs. Philip Lloyd, of Bilston. By Frederic R. Andrews, Primitive Methodist Minister. London: Primitive Methodist Office, 1873."

3.—"The Coal Mines Regulation Act, 1872, 35 and 36 Vic., cap. 76, comprising (1) coal; (2) fire-clay; (3) stratified ironstone; and (4) shale; with explanatory introduction, and notes and forms for working the Act, with a sketch of rights and remedies of master and servant summarily. By John Willim Hall, solicitor, Bilston, and clerk to the justices for the Bilston Division of Staffordshire.—*In tenebris lux.* Published for the author by Charles Stevenson, Bilston."

4.—"The Metalliferous Mines Regulation Act, 1872, 35 and 36 Vic., cap. 77, with explanatory introduction, notes on its provisions, forms for working it,

illustrations of their use, summary of owners' and agents' duties, liabilities and protections, and of rights and remedies of master and servant summarily. By J. Willim Hall."

5.—"The History of Stone and Iron, showing how stone becomes iron, and all processes until it assumes its finished state; also setting forth, by a brief outline, its utility and suitability for general trade and mercantile purpose, and the whole spiritualised. Also a resolution to join the Primitives. By S. Durnall, Bilston. Price and Beebee.

6.—"Now First Published. By authority. Complete and Full Copy of Draft Lease of the proposed Bilston Park. Bilston: Maw and Britain. 1887.

An admirably written sermon by the Rev. C. Pates, pastor of the Wood Street Baptist Chapel, bears this title :—

7.—"At Home with the Lord." A Sermon preached in the Wood Street Baptist Chapel, Bilston, by the Rev. Charles Pates, May the 8th, 1877, on the occasion of the Death of Mrs. Benjamin Attwood. Manchester: Ireland and Co. 12mo., pp. 14."

8.—"A New Guide to the Iron Trade, or Mill-Managers' and Stock-Takers' Assistant. By James Rose, Batman's Hill Ironworks, Bradley, near Bilston. 1873. 2nd edition, 1876."

9.—"Tract upon the Trust Deeds and Provisions of Trust for the Independent Chapel, Oxford Street, Bilston. By the Rev. Norman Glass, Pastor. Bilston: Price and Beebee. 1877."

10.—"Flashes from Forge and Foundry. A Volume of Poems. Under the distinguished patronage of the Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone, Premier, and H. H. Fowler, Esq., M.P. By Fred. R. Bartlett. Printed by the Shakespeare Printing Co., Bilston Staffordshire. 1886."

The following volumes are from the pen of Mr. Charles F. Forshaw, F.G.S.,F.S.S., of Bradford. He was born in Bilston, in January, 1863. His paternal grandfather, the Rev. T. Forshaw, was vicar for many years of Newchapel, in this county. The poet himself is now senior dental surgeon to the Bradford Dental Hospital.

1.—"Wanderings of Imagery. A Collection of Original Poems. By Charles Frederick Forshaw. Bradford: 1886. pp. 72."

2.—"Thoughts in the Gloaming. A Collection of Poems, composed by Charles F. Forshaw, D.D.S., Bradford. 1887. pp. 56."

3.—"Poems. By Charles F. Forshaw, LL.D., Bradford. 1889. pp. 304."

4.—"St. Bees, and other Poems, by Charles F. Forshaw, LL.D."

These contributions to poetic literature are regarded very highly by Yorkshire newspaper critics, but they are valuable rather for what they promise than for what they are. Mr. Forshaw has the "makings" of a poet; he understands the structure of verse; his descriptive powers are good; his illustrations frequently expressive, and at times full of suggestiveness. He is also editor of

1.—"Yorkshire Poets, past and present. 3 vols., post 8vo."

2.—"The Poets of Keighley, Bigley, Haworth, and District. 1891."

The last author, but by far the most able and promising of all, is Mr. Alfred Hayes, M.A., a poet of commanding abilities. This gentleman is the son of Mr. A. J. Hayes, formerly Town Clerk of Wolverhampton. He was born in Bilston, educated at New College, Oxford, and graduated M.A. In 1884, he wrote a small volume of poetry, entitled "The Death of St. Louis," being part of a work which he contemplated publishing in a complete form, but desired first of all to test the critical opinions of those best able to judge. The work was so admirably conceived, and so powerfully expressed, that it took the public by surprise, and speedily commanded much attention and admiration. The success of this preliminary venture induced him, in 1886, to issue the poem complete under the title of:—

"The Last Crusade, and other Poems. By Alfred Hayes, M.A. Cornish Bros., Birmingham, 1886.

In 1887, he wrote an admirable little poem in celebration of the Queen's visit to Birmingham, under this title:—

"A Welcome to the Queen. By Alfred Hayes, M.A., New College, Oxon. Birmingham, 1887."

CHAPTER XXII.

Place Names, their Peculiarities and Derivations.

THE origin of parochial place-names is an important and attractive study to the local historian and antiquary. Carefully pursued it throws many curious side lights upon local history, topography, and tradition, which but for the preservation of these ancient names would have vanished into thin air, like the unrecorded imaginings of genius. A place-name, happily elucidated, may reveal the exact scene of some all-but-forgotten village triumph or tragedy, some archaic custom or extinct amusement, some long lost boundary line or family association, some tribal conflict or foreign occupation. Occasionally it carries us back to the outer rim of historic knowledge—to the twilight time when history degenerates into fable, and the known imperceptibly fades into the mystic and the unknown. Sometimes it baffles by its grotesqueness, or amuses by its apparent incongruity; sometimes it astonishes by its impressive suggestiveness. Just as the fossil has a history which the geologist can understand, and the manuscript an antiquity which the palæographer can unravel, so the place-name has a meaning which the etymologist can explain; and be it of yesterday's origin, or of remote antiquity, purely etymological, arbitrary, or fanciful, it possesses its especial interest and value. History is no longer regarded merely as a record of dynastic changes, imperial pageantry, and hard-fought battles; but a record of the habits and characteristics of the masses, of their daily pursuits and amusements, of the little incidents and events which have made them what they are, and enabled them to win great victories and endure heroically great reverses. Every local

history adds something to this important study. And recognising and acknowledging the importance of minor details no parochial historian can altogether overlook so important a branch of archæological enquiry as that of place and field names.

Old surveys, plans, and rate books are the chief sources from which a historian must draw this kind of information. Until recently the value of these materials has been unthought of by parochial authorities, who have too often treated them as a tradesman does his old ledgers—i.e. consigned them to the oven or the waste-paper dealer. Luckily in our own case one or two of these documents have escaped so melancholy a fate, and here I propose to partly tell the stories that lie hidden under their uninviting exteriors.

Bordering upon Stow Heath Lane, on the Wolverhampton side of the township, lies a piece of land described in an old survey of the township as "Church Piece," History records nothing respecting the existence of a church there, but tradition steps in with a beautiful legend, common to many other places. The story runs that in the days of the Saxons the lord of the manor began to build a church upon this spot, which happened to be inhabited by a number of fairies. Offended at being disturbed in their favourite haunt, the wee people every night destroyed what the builders erected during the day. This process of building and demolition continued so long that the builders were at last compelled to desist, and the fairies remained in undisputed possession. But on Christmas eve, when fairies and goblins are supposed to be harmless, and the bird of dawning sings the whole night through, it was believed that on this very spot the chiming of bells could be faintly but distinctly heard, and that the real believer could also hear mingled with the chimes the sweet harmonies of "Gloria in excelsis," proceeding from some ghostly choir. Light has dispelled many a noxious superstition, but it has also driven away many a charming tradition—this amongst them. Near this fairy spot is a place possessing a grim and ghastly story. In the old rate books it is denominated "No Man's Land—." It is left in all cases unsurveyed, and is only described indirectly as thus, "Four fields near No Man's Piece," "Mr. Green's, at bottom of No Man's Piece," "Battle-tree

Piece near No Man's Piece," &c. Tradition alleges that this piece of land was left untilled and unrated because it was set aside for the burial of felons who were gibbeted for their crimes on the gibbet at the corner of Stow Heath Lane, from which dread instrument of punishment the name "Gibbet Lane" is derived. A further account of this gibbet will be found in a previous chapter. I have next to mention a corruption of name which I should like to see corrected by the local authorities. I allude to "Gozzard Street," a harsh, unmeaning barbarism, which has only been in use about a century. The proper name is Goddard Street, which street is the site of what was once "Goddard's Croft" and orchard—while the bridge which crosses the brook in Oxford Street was also anciently called "Goddard's Bridge." The church registers contain many entries relating to this bridge (see *ante*). Another place-name surrounded with pleasant associations is "The Butts," situate, as far as I can localise it from the survey, towards Moseley Hole. Here our village forefathers used to assemble to practice with the weapon that won the glorious victories of Poictiers, Cressy, and Agincourt. The butts were repaired by the overseers, and the charges paid out of the assessments. The name as well as the pastime has disappeared. Another famous place-name is Cruddley-Well Lane, subsequently transformed into Proud's Lane, because Major Proud built a madhouse near its entrance, in the last century. This name was derived from St. Creadda or Cedda, to whom the well was dedicated, the water of which was famous for its medicinal and miraculous virtues. It served the township as a public well until long into the present century, and was regularly looked after and repaired by the authorities. Some charges relating to this well and its winding apparatus, were the subject of an appeal to Stafford Sessions in 1823, or thereabouts. Reverting to Gibbet Lane and No Man's Land, I find a piece of land called "The Prison's," near Stowheath Lane—a natural suggestion arises as to whether this name was derived from some building once standing near the gibbet, for the temporary incarceration of felons about to be gibbetted. On this point, however, I offer no confident opinion. Another highly suggestive place-name is "Bug Piece," a vulgar enough name at first view, but suggestive

of superstition and terror in its associations. "Bug" is an ancient etymon signifying "an evil spirit," from which root we derive our common localism "bogey," a ghost or goblin. This "Bug Piece" was once believed to be haunted by a spirit, and the bravest of our ancestors would have turned pale and shivered at the bare idea of going near it after dark. We have Buggin's Lane, near Moseley Hole, Bug Hole, near Willenhall, and many other similar titles in the neighbourhood. Some people think Puck is the true word, if so it gives a similar meaning. Another name suggestive of Roman and British times is that of several pieces of land called in the old surveys, "Portway Pieces." It is believed by some that these pieces lay on the edge of an ancient British road running direct from London through Wednesbury and Wolverhampton to Liverpool; that the Romans laid it out as a vicinal way, and connected it with the great Watling Street—hence the name Port-way Pieces, just as the Portway Road is derived at Wednesbury. Connected with this far-off time is another place-name, still retained. I allude to Friezeland, at the bottom of Wolverhampton Street, near its junction with the Wolverhampton Road. How did this name arise? It is known that many Frieslanders came over to England with the Saxons, and possibly several of them—a family, perhaps, settled here—a likely supposition as there is a Friesland near Walsall. A curious specimen of modern nomenclature-making is that of "Shift End," now Wolverhampton Street. How, by all that is ludicrous, could such a name have arisen. In the simplest way in the world, gentle reader. At one time the top end of Bilston, i.e. the termination of the houses, was close to the Black and White Horse public houses—both sides of Wolverhampton Street then being enclosed fields, crofts, and gardens, with the old coach road running through it to Wolverhampton. When, however, houses were erected on both sides, as now, the end of the town was "shifted"—to use a localism—or removed, and so it came to be called Shifted End or Shift End. Mill Lane, branching out of this street, was so-called because anciently a large wind-mill stood near, which is several times referred to in old deeds. A further place-name, illustrative of ancient times, occurs in "The Lunt," or "Lunt Pieces." This word means a lawn or open

place in a wood where the game was driven for slaughter. Up to the time of the Norman Conquest, as I have shown in a previous chapter, the boundaries of Cannock Chase ran through Bilston, hence it is easy to see how the place came to be called "The Lunt," or "The Lawnd." A place-name calling to mind an old dead and gone trade, is "The Tutoring Piece." Flax used to be largely grown in Bilston, and here it was afterwards prepared for weaving. The process was called sometimes "chutoring," but properly "tutoring," preparing it by "watering," "combing," &c. The registers contain many baptismal and burial entries of flax-dressers and their children. A place-name at Bradley, known once as Glass-house Row, was so called from a glass-house once having been erected there, and glass-blowing for a time carried on, Lord Monboddo, the scientist, being interested in it. A name of ancient origin is The "Ryddings," a Saxon name for a mine, and indicating the antiquity of mining in this township.

Among the place-names derived from ancient families may be mentioned "Hoo's Croft," and "Hoo Marsh," from the Lords of the Manor of Bradley of that name, ancestors of the present Scott family of Great Barr: "Linton's Croft," from the Linton family, whose residence was anciently in Oatmeal Square, High Street: "Eaton's Field," from Captain Eaton, who was shot by a foot-pad in the streets of London, in the middle of the last century: "Five Roger Fields," in Bradley, from Roger Perry, who in the fifteenth century was owner thereof: "Upper Boveroaks, and Boveroaks," from the ancient family of the Bovereaux, previously alluded to: "Pipe's Meadow," from Sir Richard Pipe, Lord Mayor of London in Queen Elizabeth's time: and "Kempson's Croft," from the Kempsons who resided here in the 16th century. Among the absurdities of local nomenclature may be mentioned—

"Firing Irons,"
"Five Never Sweat Meadows,"
"Mince Pie Piece,"
"Three-square Meadow,"
"Goosall Piece,"
"Frog's Piece,"
"Salt Butter Piece,"
"The Wet Furlongs,"
"The Roundabouts,"
"Pigsty Oak Piece."

Among the names of obvious derivation are "Brocken's Piece," from the Bracken or fern that used to cover it; "Penny

Loaf Piece," from a dole charge upon it to provide the poor with penny loaves; "The Bull Holes," from the bull-baitings that used to be held there; and "St. Leonard's Hill," from its having been given to the church, towards the endowment.

Among those whose derivation is doubtful are the following:

"Battle Tree Piece,"
"The Nimmins,"
"Little Shreaves,"
"Rawbone's Crofts,"
"Put Piece,"
"Dal's Piece."

Place-names illustrating the rural character of the town in the last century, are the following:—

"Oak Leasow,"
"Hare Croft,"
"Withy Piece,"
"Cherry Tree Piece,"
"Ash Tree Piece,"
"Elm Leasow,"
"Crab Tree Piece,"
"Corn Croft."

Mining operations for a hundred years have turned a smiling landscape into a desert, and left its scarifying influences upon the population also.

TOWN HALL, BILSTON.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Modern Progress of the Town. Memorabilia.

N a previous chapter we brought down the history of the town to the end of the second decade of the present century. We have now only to garner a few modern facts, and a few odd items, curious or informing, which have escaped notice in the previous pages.

In 1835, the Rev. W. Leigh resigned the living of St. Leonard's, having been appointed to the government living of Pulham. At a vestry meeting called to consider the resignation it was resolved "That the thanks of this meeting be presented to the Rev. W. Leigh, for the services he had rendered to the township, and for the liberality he had manifested towards his dissenting brethren." In 1833, his services during the awful visitation of Cholera had been recognised by his brother magistrates and others, who presented him with a silver epergne and four dishes, in token of their admiration of his unremitting exertions during that awful crisis in the town's history. Mr. Leigh was an able preacher, broad and generous in his sympathies, earnest in looking after the welfare of the inhabitants, and a leader in every movement for the improvement of the town. He died at Pulham, April 12, 1858, aged 80 years.

In 1833, the Roman Catholic Church, dedicated to the "Holy Trinity," was erected. It is built of white bricks, in the Gothic style, and at a cost of about £2,000. It was enlarged in 1844, to provide for the increase in the congregation, occasioned

by the great influx of Irish labourers, who came here for employment in the works, furnaces, and mines. Last year, the chapel was renovated. Among its priests have been the Rev. George Fox, the Rev. George Duckett, Dr. McCave, and Fathers Power and Stone.

We have omitted to mention that the Independents or Congregationalists formed a small church in or about the year 1775. The chapel was situate in the street called Meeting Street from this circumstance, near the site of the present town mission chapel. In 1822, a plot of land was purchased in Oxford Street, upon which a chapel and schoolroom were erected. The trust deed states that "the land was purchased by a certain congregation of Protestant Dissenters of the Independent Denomination, worshipping God in a certain Chapel or Meeting House, now assembling at Bilston." "That this meeting house being too small it was intended to build a larger one, and that the expense was to be met by the sale of the materials of the old meeting house, and by voluntary contributions." The chapel, schoolroom, and house, were accordingly erected. This building existed till 1863, when the present structure took its place. The foundation stone of the new chapel was laid December 8th, 1863, by Mr. W. Hatton. The building is in the Byzantine style of architecture; is faced externally with red bricks, with bands and dressings of Hollington stone. The front has a double-grouped window with carved heads, stone jambs, and centre column, and is crowned with a clock panel and circular pediments. The entrance doors have deeply recessed arched heads, supported on detached columns, with carved capitals. The chapel stands seven feet from the line of road, and is approached through iron gates by a broad flight of steps to the front entrance. The interior is executed in a style according with the exterior, the rostrum, pews, and gallery being ornamentally worked in stained and varnished wood. Its cost was £1,600.

In 1845, the small chapel situate in Railway Street, and locally known as the "Welsh Chapel," was erected for the accomodation of Welsh Methodists.

In the same year, March 24, 1845, a vestry meeting was held to examine a draft scheme proposed to be laid before Her Majesty in Council by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for constituting a separate district for spiritual purposes to be called the district of St. Luke's, Bilston, out of the chapelry; it was unanimously resolved that it was both desirable and expedient to constitute the said district, and the inhabitants thanked the Commissioners for their plan. It was not, however, until the year 1852, that the church was erected. It is a neat structure of the early English, or first pointed style, consisting of nave, north and south aisles, and tower and spire. Room is provided for 900 sittings, 600 of which are free. The cost of its erection, including schools and vicarage, amounted to about £4,900. The Rev. W. Prosser is the present vicar.

In 1847, the Asiatic Cholera again visited Bilston, which retained its title of the "epidemic centre of the Midland Coalfield" by distancing its neighbours in the fatal race of death. In about the same period as that of 1832, 730 persons were hurried to the grave. The awful scenes of 1832 were repeated, and still the people and the place were as dirty and miserable as heretofore. Lessons, learned at such a cost, failed not this time in their object. Immediate action resulted, and strenuous efforts were made to improve the condition of the town.

In 1849, the first railway through Bilston was opened, the first train running on Nov. 12, that year.

In 1850, a bill was presented to Parliament "for paving, lighting, cleansing, and improving the township of Bilston, for improving the Market, for supplying the town with water, and for providing a Cemetery." Much opposition to the bill was aroused, and at a town's meeting a poll was demanded. This was granted; the poll opened on the 3rd June, but on that day the demand for a poll was withdrawn. The Bill shortly after passed into law.

In 1853, public baths and wash-houses were erected at a cost of £2,700. A portion of the building was for some years fitted up and used as a new room in connection with the Bilston Institute.

In 1854 (May 2nd) the foundation stone of the Cemetery Chapel was laid by James Loxdale, Esq., and the grounds were opened for interment on March 9th, 1855. The cemetery area contains 9 acres, 2 roods, 23 poles, and the total cost was about £5,000. The chapel is built of best blue bricks, and the grounds are tastefully laid out. In this cemetery is erected a neat and handsome monument (now seriously out of repair) to the memory of John Etheridge, the philanthropist, who died October 28th, 1856. Here we pause to do justice to the memory of one of the most honoured inhabitants of Bilston.

John Etheridge was the son of John Etheridge, an artist in Japan ware. He was born in the year 1772 (in the house in which he died) now called "Etheridge House," in Church Street.

In early life John Etheridge, the younger, displayed many of those qualities which made his after life so glorious and so noble. As he grew up he became deeply impressed with the state of morality around him, and even before he reached to the years of discretion formed many plans for the amelioration of the condition of his fellow men. His first step was the establishment of a school to teach the poor to read, and his scholars were obtained from some of the worst hovels in the town. What Robert Raikes was to Gloucester, John Etheridge was to Bilston, viz. :—the founder of Sunday schools. He was a teacher in the first Sunday school, which was held at the "Old Meeting House." He was a teacher at the old Wesleyan Chapel, Temple Street, in 1798, and at the Baptist Chapel, Wood Street.

Sunday after Sunday, year after year, John Etheridge was seen, like the "Good Shepherd," leading ragged children and grown up persons to the Sabbath Schools. He was no sectarian, no narrow-minded bigot : the whole parish was the object of his solicitude and care, and all who needed were welcome to his help. He gave of his substance to feed the poor, and never turned away from the cry of distress.

Perhaps the most striking and stirring periods of his life, were during the Cholera Visitations of 1832 and '49. These events caused the gold of his religion and life to gleam with the brightest lustre ; and to his active benevolence many persons owed their lives.

Who does not recollect something of his noble deeds? Who does not recollect his quaint card, displayed in his shop window, on which was written in large letters the word "Out," to show he was from home? Whoever remembers going into his shop without receiving a kind word of advice, or a religious tract? An estimate may be formed of the extent of his gifts in that and other ways, from the following statement:—

"He gave away with his own hands 10,000 bibles, 41,000 prayer books, 15,000 testaments, and 100,000 religious tracts."

His shop was truly a "house of God," and the good thus done will never be ascertained until the last great day of account.

It was a sad day for Bilston when the Christian hero fell asleep. The news rang like a death knell upon the hearts of the whole people. What! John Etheridge dead? was the question on everybody's lips, and the breathless suspense told how eagerly they waited for the answer. Many wept with heart-felt grief as the bitter truth was realized.

Had a stranger passed through Bilston on the morning of the 6th of November, 1856, he would have seen that something sad was transpiring. The closed shutters, the drawn blinds, the crowds of people clad in mourning, all told of no common bereavement. The very poor with scarcely a rag to cover them put on some faded remnant of better days, and exhibited more heartfelt sorrow than is often seen among that class. A sadder day Bilston never witnessed than the one on which its philanthropic inhabitant was borne to his last resting place. The town was wrapped in gloom: the solemn tolling of the death-bell, and the sable trappings of the mourning multitudes were the most distinguishable features. When the funeral cortege with its train of thousands, reached the grave, and the low, sacred, and impressive service for the dead fell upon their ears, there broke forth a deep and audible sob, and down the weather-beaten faces of hundreds the tears rolled quickly, as a tribute to departed worth. Never will that scene be forgotten by the witnesses!

The inhabitants resolved to perpetuate his name by the erection of a monument, which bears this inscription—

SOUTH, "Erected by subscription of the inhabitants of Bilston, in memory of John Etheridge, late of this township. Endeared throughout the district by a long life of practical philanthropy; spending his Sabbaths for half a century in teaching miners to read the scriptures, in a little school of his own; his co-operation and support effectually promoted every other school in the parish.

EAST. His humble shop was the gratuitous depôt for the sale of bibles and religious works a generation before reduced prices made them accessible through other means, and his counter was the Savings' Bank and Clothing Club of the district. His intrepid exertions during the visitations of Cholera in 1832 and 1849; his active superintendence of the school, and long-continued distribution of the funds raised for the relief of the widows and orphans, won the gratitude of the bereaved and the admiration of the neighbourhood.

NORTH. Having no descendants of his own his catholic heart adopted the general poor as his family, and when some 15,000 of all grades, followed him as a father to the tomb, the consciousness of a public bereavement and their appreciation of their extraordinary loss, prompted its perpetual expression in this monument.

WEST. Never known to allude to his multiplied charities until his death-bed called for an explanation of the little he had to bequeath; having been his own executor by mortgaging his last freehold to effect a legacy for a neighbouring hospital. The mortgages and the bequest touchingly symbolized the mingled sacrifice of self and substance which had characterized his life."

Ignoring all dependence on any works of righteousness which he had done, and resting on the alone merits and atonement of his Lord and Saviour, he died in peace, gathered as a full shock of corn in his season already white unto the harvest. October 28th, 1856, aged 84. Among his last words were "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace."

The Baptist Chapel in Wood Street was originally erected in the last century for the use of the Independent body, but that interest not being then very strong in the township, the officials

came to the resolution to close the chapel. At that time a few Baptists of the neighbourhood wanting a meeting house, agreed to purchase the building on the condition that they paid off the debt then upon it, amounting to £237 7s. 11d. The property was vested in eleven persons of the Baptist denomination, on May 29th, 1799. At first there was no stationed minister, but in July, 1805, the Rev. William Willey was appointed. In 1860, the chapel was closed and the present building erected, very little of the original structure being preserved. In November, 1860, the late Rev. C. H. Spurgeon preached two sermons on behalf of the restoration fund, in the Wesleyan Chapel, kindly lent by the trustees for the occasion, when £200 were collected. The chapel was opened shortly after, the opening sermons being preached by the Rt. Hon. Lord Teynham. In 1876, the minister's house in Wellington Street, was erected. The Rev. C. Pates was appointed in 1875.

The New Connexion Chapel in Oxford Street was erected in 1835, the worshippers having previously belonged to the Wesleyan body.

The Primitive Methodist Chapel was erected in 1841.

In 1857, the Temperance Hall, Broad Street, was erected, in which year, and the succeeding one, Bilston passed through one of the severest commercial crises on record. So great was the depression, and so widespread the disasters that in that year the population decreased by 1,600 people—an exodus necessitated by the want of employment.

A very important art and industrial exhibition was opened in St. Leonard's Schools, then recently erected, on June 13th, 1859, by Lord Dartmouth, who was supported by the Rt. Hon. C. P. Villiers, M.P.; J. Hartley, Esq., Mayor of Wolverhampton; and Sir R. Peel. The noble Lord after speaking highly of the exhibition said, "It was an oft-repeated assertion that their countrymen had no taste. He would, however, only ask those who were fond of crying up what they saw in foreign parts to come here, and they would admit that there was great taste and

cleverness even among the people of Bilston. He (the speaker) said, EVEN of Bilston, because he believed it had not had the fairness and impartiality it deserved, being so mixed up with the Black Country and pre-eminently called 'Smoky Bilston,' and that he thought it high time something was done to remove the false and ungenerous impressions." The exhibition was highly successful and had a most elevating influence on the people.

A working man's club was established here in 1864, but from a variety of causes the institution fell to the ground.

In 1866, three beautiful water fountains were presented to this town by John Mason, Esq., and they now constitute very pretty ornaments of the places where they are severally erected. The central one is dedicated to the memory of Mrs. Mason, and bears several appropriate passages of Scripture.

In January, 1867, St. Martin's Church, Bradley, erected by the munificence of the Baldwin family, and Mr. Edward Pugh, was consecrated by the Bishop of Lichfield. Its first minister was the Rev. J. Williamson, B.A.; its present vicar is the Rev. W. W. Chettle. Schools and a vicarage were also erected. A clock and peal of six bells was subsequently added, being the gift of Mr. Edward Pugh. The peal was cast by John Taylor and Co., bellfounders, of Loughborough, and the clock manufactured by Mr. T. W. Evans, of Handsworth. The cost was nearly £1,000. The weight of the tenor bell, pitched in E flat, is 24 cwt.

In 1870, the Free Libraries' Act was carried by an overwhelming majority, at a town's meeting held in St. Leonard's Schools, for the purpose of considering the matter. A committee was formed of which Mr. W. Hatton was chairman, and Mr. F. Nokes, secretary, for the purpose of raising £1,000, the cost of fitting up a room and providing books, and this amount the Committee pledged itself to raise if the Township Commissioners would add a Free Library to the Town Hall Buildings then about

to be erected. This offer was accepted; the present Town Hall and Free Library were happily united, and subscriptions and the proceeds of a bazaar more than made up the amount promised by the Committee. The Bilston Institute then, through its hon. secretary, Mr. G. T. Lawley, offered the town its library of books, amounting to nearly 1,500 volumes, which being accepted formed the nucleus of the present collection. The Town Hall buildings were enlarged in 1880, the assembly room being now one of the handsomest in the Midland Counties.

In 1876, the Old Fox posting house, which stood between Etheridge House and the Town Hall, and had long been an eyesore, both on account of its delapidated condition and its projection into the street, was removed for street improvements. The purchase of this old property enabled the Commissioners to effect a valuable improvement by widening the street and opening up the view of the Town Hall.

In 1877, a brass lectern, highly burnished, was placed in St. Leonard's Church, the gift of Mr. John Mason. The eagle with outspread wings is beautifully cast and chased. It stands on a burnished ball of brass, supported by an ornamental pillar of chased design. It bears on its base the following inscription :— "To the glory of Almighty God, and in affectionate remembrance of Sarah Mason, who died March 10th, 1863, this lectern is placed in this church by her bereaved husband. 1877."

On May 12th, 1882, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for England, prepared and laid before Her Majesty in Council a scheme, bearing date 20th April, for assigning the right of patronage to the new parish of St. Luke, Bilston. By an order dated 8th of August, 1845, the district of St. Luke was constituted out of the chapelry of St. Leonard, Bilston, in the parish of Wolverhampton, and the same district had since become a new parish. No specific assignment of the whole or part of the right of patronage and nomination of the minister of the district or of the incumbent of the new parish, was made by the order, but the

late Mr. Edward Pugh paid to the credit of the Commissioners' account at the Bank of England the sum of £1,500, upon the understanding that they should hold it towards the augmentation of the endowment of the new parish of St. Luke, Bilston, and the Commissioners agreed with Mr. Pugh to pay by equal half-yearly payments to the vicar or incumbent of the new parish, a yearly sum of £50, so long as the capital sum remains in the Commissioners' hands. The Commissioners recommended that the whole right of patronage of the new parish and of the nomination of the vicar or incumbent should be exercised by the following five persons :—Edward Pugh, Rev. Alex. Baring Gould (Winchester), Rev. Frederick Williams (Saltley), William Millington (Wolverhampton), and the Rev. W. Haggar Barlow (Islington). The scheme was approved by Her Majesty in Council and ratified.

In 1882, a new organ was erected in St. Luke's Church, on which a memorial brass plate has the following inscription :—"To the glory of God Most High, and in dear remembrance of Sophia Amelia Prosser, mother of the Vicar of this parish, this organ was erected, 1882." From an article in *Sunday at Home*, we copy the following :—"Mrs. Prosser was the grand-daughter of the well-known Dibdin, and seemed to have inherited much of his peculiar vivacity. She did not begin to write for the press till she was past fifty, but her manuscripts from the first found ready acceptance, and she soon secured a wide circle of readers. Her stories were distinguished by her cheerful piety, unaffected simplicity of faith, and large charity. She delighted in portraying the rural poor, amongst whom as a clergyman's wife she had had large experience, and was exceedingly happy in presenting their brighter traits as well as the foibles which are common to human nature. Amongst her numerous contributions to the *Sunday at Home*, we might specify as a good illustration of her characteristics, "Quality Fogg's Old Ledger," in which she portrays the transformation of a self-righteous man under the influence of trouble. She wrote also many longer tales dealing with more varied life, amongst which may be mentioned "The Man in Possession," and "The Awdries and their Friends," which appeared in *The Leisure Hour*. In these more secular productions

her native humour had free play, and her dramatic and conversational powers came into exercise. She contributed also to that journal a series of "Original Fables," in which, under quaint guise, many lessons of homely wisdom were taught. They were afterwards issued as a volume illustrated by Weir and Griset, and won from no less a humourist than Mr. Spurgeon the comment that she was "a peeress among parable makers." Mrs. Prosser's life was one of unceasing industry and devout self-abnegation, reflecting in action her own best teaching. The organ is due to the large-hearted liberality of the family and friends of the late Mrs. Prosser.

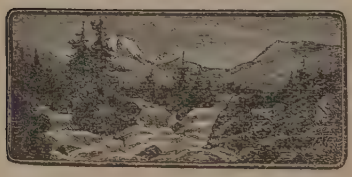
In 1882, a bazaar in behalf of St. Mary's endowment fund, was held in the Town Hall, when the sum of £483 was raised. This, together with grants of £250 from the Diocesan Societies, and subscriptions making a total of £1,000, has been met by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners with a like amount, and thus the annual sum of £66 is added to that of £141, which hitherto formed the whole of the endowment income.

In 1890, the church was restored, the money being raised partly by money left by the late Mr. John Mason, and partly by public subscriptions. The Rev. C. Batchellor is the present vicar.

The latest addition to the public buildings of the town is a covered market, which has been erected at a total cost little short of £10,000.

Since 1861, the population of Bilston has shown a tendency to decrease, owing to flooding of the mines, and the closing of most of the blast furnaces and forges. In that year the population stood at 24,762—but in 1881, it had decreased to 22,730. During the last decade, however, owing to an increase in the number of galvanizing and tin plate factories, the population in the year 1891, according to the official census return, has risen to 23,453. From the year 1861, a remarkable change for the better has taken place in the appearance of the town. Then, coal-pit

mounds covered Wellington Street, Cambridge Street, and many other parts of the town now built upon, blast furnaces vomited forth smoke and flames on every hand, coke fires besmirched and blackened every surrounding object, unsightly engine frames and whimseys made a hideous landscape still more unsightly ; and the roar of furnaces, the clang of hammers, the clanking of machinery, were sounds familiar if not musical. The story is told of a man who lost himself in trying to find a blade of grass ; while the only flowers that were to be met with were rhetorical ones, which required no sun to ripen them. Now smoke and flame, and clank and clangour, are nearly banished, pit mounds are in many cases levelled, and smiling crops of grain or grass adorn the surfaces. Trees, erected in 1876—through the good offices of the late Dr. Best, Mr. I. A. Thompson, Mr. G. T. Lawley, and a few others—now beautify our principal street, and down its re-ruralised lanes the wandering voice of the cuckoo is occasionally heard, and the full-throated molody of the "lyric lark" falls upon field and hedgerow, a very shower of musical rain. Had it not been for the short-sighted prejudices and narrow-minded policy of some of the wiseacres of the town, Bilston by this time would have been in possession of a public park, which the late Mr. John Willim Hall had liberally designed to provide upon certain conditions of no very onerous nature ; but that design was frustrated, to the regret of every inhabitant who cared really for the prosperity of the town. Perhaps its acquisition is only deferred !



CHAPTER XXIV.

Doles and Charities.

THE maladministration of doles and charities by parochial authorities has frequently been the theme of indignant comment. There is scarcely a town or parish in the kingdom of which it can be honestly said—"Here the poor have their rights unfilched and unappropriated." In many instances trustees have audaciously stolen the lands or tenements upon which the dole charges rested; in many others they culpably winked at the non-payment of interest, until the claims were forgotten or irrecoverable. In several notorious instances the benefaction tables were surreptitiously removed from the church walls and hidden away or destroyed, to cover some fraudulent intention; while, even when there has been no felonious intent entertained there has been shown such callous indifference to the rights of the poor, that "the want of thought" has resulted as disastrously as where there has been a "want of will" to protect them. Why, if fair market value were given for all the doles, lands, tenements, commons, and village greens that the rich have stolen from the poor, and properly invested, there would to-day be no need of poor rates nor workhouses, and England would indeed be "merry England" still. Alas! might has been too often a synonym for right, and a heraldic badge or coat of arms proved as powerful as a legal document. There are but few misappropriations now, perhaps, because there are few doles and village commons left to be misappropriated, but the process is not altogether obsolete in country villages, where the inhabitants remain in Arcadian innocence. Bilston has not altogether escaped from these thoughtless or criminal custodians. We have recorded

in the parish registers several sums of money invested for the benefit of the poor. *The poor we have, but where are the benefactions?* The question irresistibly reminds us of the ballad:

"Hans Breitman gif a barty,
Where is dat barty now."

Take the following case as an illustration. By an entry in the parish book dated October 24th, 1748, it appears that "the Rev. Edward Best, together with Edward Kempson and William Smith, chapelwardens, were ordered to empower Mr. Samuel Redhead, merchant, of Antigua, to receive a legacy left to the liberty of Bilston by Charles Osborne,* of St. Christopher, deceased." Was this legacy ever received? Was it ever distributed? One thing only is certain,—no account of it is recorded in the parish books. Again, Mr. Samuel Pipe, in 1711, left ten pounds, the yearly interest thereof to be given to ten poor widows. That interest has not been paid within the memory of the oldest inhabitant. Even Humphry Perry's charity—the most important of all our local charities—was once in imminent peril of being lost. These instances do not exhaust the list, as will presently be seen. Even the church property was subjected to the same spoliation. Priestfields,—or *le priest fields*, as the church books have it, the fields belonging to the priest, no longer belong to the minister—they vanished down the maw of the encroacher. St. Leonard's Hill, given by Thomas Perry, in 1494, to the church, was, in 1623, the subject of a lawsuit, because forsooth, the sole surviving trustee claimed it as his own! Fortunately, in that case the attempt was not successful. The following benefactions are copied from the tables existing in the church at the time of its enlargement in 1827, the remarks upon them being taken from an old paper formerly in the possession of the Township Commissioners, but which with a large number of town documents was sold as waste paper, when the Town Hall was erected!

TABLE I.

"Mr. Thomas Perrye gave a piece of land, called St. Leonard's Hill; and Mrs. Susan Humphries gave a piece of land callyd Littel Greaves, towards ye maintenance of divine service in Bylston Chapel."

* A descendant of Charles Osborne, priest of Bilston, in the 16th century.

"Mr. John Perry gave ye ground on which ye school-house was builded, and 5 ℔s towards erecting it. Mr. Ames, curate of Bilston, at ye joint expense of ye inhabitants and himself compleated the sd building."

"Mr. Rd. Devye gave 10 ℔s, ordering yè yearlie interest thereof to be given on Good Friday, to the poor of Bilston."

[By a vestry order dated September 1st, 1754, the overseers for the time being were to pay the interest to be applied according to the will of the said Richard Devye. The interest fell into arrear, but was subsequently paid by Mr. Fellows, attorney, of Dudley. It is no longer paid.]

"Mr. Ed. Dudley, of Tipton, gave 20 ℔s, ordering ye yearly interest of it to be given to Bilston poor, on St. John Baptist and St. Thomas's days." [No longer distributed.]

"Mr. Robert Rawley settled 10s. per annum towards ye schooling of 2 poor children, and ye said Robert also gave 10 ℔s, ordering yt ye curate should have 8s. of ye yearly interest, for a sermon on ye 1st day of January, and 2s. to be given to ye poor at church."

"Mrs. Alice Rawley, his widow, gave 6 ℔s, ordering ye yearlie interest should be given to ye curate of Bylston, for a sermon on St. John Baptist day."

"Saml Pipe, Esq. gave £10, ordering ye yearly interest of it to be given on ye 17 of Aug. to X poor widos of Bilston."

"Saml, his son, gave a silver chalice for ye communion."

"The Rev. John Tomkeys, of Snitterfield, in Warwickshire, clerk, by his last will dated 14 June, 1703, gave his library of books (some few excepted) for ye use of ye curate of Bilston. He also gave all his lands in Staffordshire and Warwickshire (after ye life of his wido) for ye use of ye said curate for ever

John Rawley and Will Cooper,
Chapelwarden, Anno Domino, 1711."

TABLE II.

"Humphry Perry, of Stafford, Esq., a native of this town, by his will bearing date Oct. 24, 1716, charged his whole copyhold

estate at Bilston, with the payment of 26£ yearly, for the following uses, viz.: 8£ a year to be paid qrtrly to 2 poor relations, 6£ a year for putting out a a poor child apprentice from Stafford and Bilston alternately, 8£ a year for the schooling, clothing, and buying books for 6 poor children at Bilston; £2 12s. to be given yearly, in bread, in Bilston Chapel, by the Minister and Chapelwardens, viz.: 12 penny loaves each Sunday morning in the year, to 12 poor inhabitants of Bilston; 10s. a year for a sermon to be preached in Bilston Chapel on the Sunday next after Midsummer, in the afternoon, and the remaining 18s. to the Minister or person who shall keep an account of the receipts and disbursements of the said money."

"Mr. Rd. Hawksford, of Bilston, by his will, bearing date July 14, 1720, charged 3 acres of Freehold land in Wednesfield commonfield, with the payment of 10s. yearly, in pursuance of 2 legacies left by his father and mother, who ordered the above sum to be equally divided by the heir of the Hawksford family, among 20 poor widows or persons in Bilston, on the 25 or 26 of Dec. for ever. N.B. The above-mentioned 3 acres of land were exchanged with Thos. Tomkys, Gent., for land in Bilston coalpit field, now enclosed and called the Dole piece.

Rev. Ed. Best, Curate,
Wm. Smith, Jos. Eaton, Chapelwardens, 1746."

[The Dole piece here mentioned was situate in Moseley Hole, and consisted of 3 acres and 29 poles of arable land, but soon after its purchase it fell into the possession of Mr. S. Bickley (by what means the register saith not) who commenced at once to get the mines.]

TABLE III.

"Rd. Ames, Curate of Bilston, gave 100£ towards procuring Q. Anne's Bounties, for the aug. of B. Curacy. The said Rd. also gave a folio bible and common prayer book of Royal paper for the use of Di. service in B. Chap., and by his last will, left his Lib. of Bks., for the use of the Curts. of B., for Ever."

"Mr. Thos. Smith, senr., who died Oct. 15, 1722, left by his last will, 6£, ordering the yearly interest thereof to be distributed in a Dole of Bread upon every last Sunday in the month, after evening service, to the poor of Bilston then at Chapel."

[From a vestry order dated June 8th, 1776, the sum of £6, left by Thomas Smith, senr., was then in the hands of the Rev. Mr. Best, which together with the £3 left by Thomas Smith, jun., son of the above, was paid into the hands of the overseers, and laid out by them in the support of the poor, and the overseers for the time being, are to be accountable for, and pay the yearly interest to be applied as directed by the benefaction. W. Leigh, curate].

"Mrs. Eliz. Eades, by her last will, bearing date April, 1726, gave the sum of ten pounds to be distributed in bread among the poor of Bilston, by chapelwardens and overseers of the poor in such manner as they shall think proper."

"Mr. Isaac Tomkys, of Warwick, a native of this town, who died Aug. 15, 1728, gave by his last will £10 to be applied to some charitable use in Bilston."

["N.B. The yearly interest of the 3 last mentioned legacies was by a vestry order of Jan. 14, 1728, appointed to be distributed in a sixpenny dole of bread in Bilston Chapel, on every Sunday throughout the year, to six poor inhabitants of Bilston then present.

Rev. Ed. Best, Curate.
Wm. Smith, Jos. Eaton, C. Wardens."]

TABLE IV.

"Mr. Thos. Smith, junr., of Bilston, by his last will, bearing date May 22, 1728, left the sum of 3 pounds to be set out to interest by the Curates and Chapelwardens for the time being, and the yearly interest thereof to be by them equally distributed to six poor widows of Bilston, on the feast of St. Thomas, for ever."

"Mrs. Sarah Pipe who died Sep. 20, 1732, gave, by her last will, 40 pounds, ordering the yearly interest thereof to be applied towards the education of poor children of Bilston."

[The last two legacies were allowed to lie undistributed for some years, for in a note in the church books, dated 1813, the Rev. W. Leigh severely censures the overseers for not having more regularly carried out the wishes of the deceased. In a vestry order dated Sept. 1st, 1754, it was unanimously agreed that from Michaelmas next, the interest of Mrs. Sarah Pipe's legacy should be applied for the schooling of poor children, pursuant to the recommendation of Mrs. Pipe's executors.]

"The late Mr. Matthew Birch, by his will dated July 4, 1756, charged his copyhold house in Bilston with the payment of £1 6s. for ever, to be given in a sixpenny dole of bread by the chapelwardens for the time being, every Sunday, after evening service, to six poor persons then at chapel who do not receive pay of the parish.

Wm. Smith, Jos. Eaton, Chapelwardens, 1748."

"Mr. James Johnson, of Birmingham, gave a mahogany table."

"Mr. Walter Tippin, of Birmingham, gave a silver flagon."

"Mrs. Sarah Hawksford, of Bilston, gave a silver paten for the use of the communion in Bilston Chapel."

TABLE V.

"The late Mrs. Jane Swinnerton, deceased, widow of Saml. Pipe, hitherto of Bilston, Esq., deceased, by her nuncupative will gave the sum of 20 pounds to the poor of Bilston. Her daughter and executrix, Mrs. Annie Watson, desired that the interest of this money might be given in bread on St. Paul's Day, to poor people of Bilston then at church. The money was accordingly paid into the hands of the chapelwardens, and they for the time being are, by order of vestry, to be accountable for the yearly interest to be applied as before named.

Rev. John Best, A.M., Curate.
Saml. Proud, } Chapelwardens.
John Parkes, }
1775."

The following is a copy of the inscription upon the interior wall of the church, near the vestry, relating to the doles now distributed, and a glance will show the havoc which time and carelessness—to use no harsher terms—have made.

"Many of the ancient Doles and Charities recorded on the various tables in the church having been lost, some by the improper investment of the capital, and others through neglect and lapse of time, it is thougbt well to record afresh those which are still in existence, and to add the enumeration of other munificent gifts to the poor, with which the parish has been recently endowed."

I.

Mr. Robert Rawley's charity of Two Shillings is distributed to the poor on the first day of January.

II.

Humphry Perry's charity is regularly administered with a new scheme, sanctioned by the Charity Commissioners and bearing date 29th June, 1882.

III.

Matthew Birch's charity is distributed in bread to six poor persons every Sunday.

IV.

Ambrose Tibbatt's charity is distributed on St. Thomas's Day, to 10 aged men, as directed by his will, dated 2nd May, 1815.

V.

William Shale's charity to 10 aged men and 10 aged women, distributed at same time in accordance with his will, dated 9th March, 1857.

VI.

Sarah Mason's charity, one third share of the interest on £1,200 consols, the handsome gift of John Mason, Esq., is regularly distributed on the 10th September, to 10 aged women, in accordance with a deed of endowment, dated 24th June, 1867.

VII.

John Mason's charity, the generous gift of the same donor, and to the like amount, is distributed on St. Thomas's Day. The deed of endowment is dated Nov. 25th, 1870.

VIII.

The Overseers are entrusted with the distribution of a large number of hospital tickets, with which the parish was

endowed by the late Richard Thompson, Esq. The Vicar is likewise entrusted with the like distribution by a deed of gift of the late Edward Pugh, Esq., dated April 3rd, 1882.

N.B.—This deed of gift gives likewise £5 annually to St. Edward's Schools. The Vicar is also entrusted with 100 votes with the Wolverhampton Orphanage, the gift of the same liberal benefactor, Edward Pugh, Esq.

Blessed be he that considereth the poor and needy, but no blessing be to him that robbeth them. Amen.

CHARLES LEE, Vicar.
GEORGE L. SANSOME, STEPHEN B. COLE, } Churchwardens.
W. BOWEN, Vestry Clerk.

The charities which now remain are regularly and carefully administered under the watchful care of the Vicar, the Rev. C. Lee, M.A.

CHAPTER XXV.

Historical Notes on the Iron, Coal, Japan, and other Industries.

ANTIQUARIES were for some years divided as to the exact antiquity of iron-making in Britain. Some alleged that the Britons themselves understood the manufacture and carried it on in a small way before the Romans invaded the country. Others on the contrary asserted that the Britons were ignorant of the knowledge of working iron ore. The question has, however, now been entirely set at rest by the discoveries of archæologists in the burial mounds of undoubted British origin, in which, besides old pottery and personal ornaments, have been found numerous instruments of iron, all going to prove that the statement of early chronicles, that the Britons went to war in chariots whose wheels were armed with short *iron* blades, was an accurate one. Hutton, who was not an archæologist, though he was a very able historian, in his "History of Birmingham," says, on this point, "We know the instruments of war used by the Britons were sword, spear, shield, and scythe. If they were not the manufacturers, how came they by these instruments? We cannot allow that either they or the chariots were imported, because that will give them a much greater consequence. They must have been well acquainted with the tools used in husbandry, for they were masters of the field in a double sense. Bad, also, as their houses were, a chest of carpenter's tools would be necessary to complete them. We cannot doubt, from these evidences and others which might be adduced, that the Britons understood the manufacture of iron."

That this district was remotely engaged in the manufacture of iron is open to proof, for immense masses of cinder, scoriæ, and refuse, largely charged with iron in a half fused condition, have been found at West Bromwich, Wednesbury, Bilston, &c. These relics of early iron-making are locally known by the name of "Dane's Cinders"—a name which is strong proof of their antiquity, though I do not think it to be rightly used, as the Danes never stayed long enough in any district in England to have enabled them to accumulate such heaps of industrial refuse.

From this cause the country around early lost much of its timber, and in 1665, we find Dud Dudley deploring the loss of the "mighty forests" which had once clothed South Staffordshire. Roman tools have been found in the ironstone workings of Cannock Chase, and also, according to the late Colonel Bagnall, near Walsall. A furnace existed on the Rushall road, near Ladypool, from very early times, and the ore was brought thither on horseback for the sake of the wood and water. This furnace was standing in 1718. Close by stood (1735) a forge, so that they smelted and turned out their iron in the rough. Plott, writing in 1686, mentions this furnace as standing "in the Park" near the "Mill meadow." In making the present sewage farm at Bescot, the remains of ancient ironworks were discovered. In 1617, this was in the possession of John Wollaston, and is described as an iron mill or smythy. Another record calls it the "Bloome Smythie, sometime the inheritance of Walter Levison."

If it were necessary many instances of early iron-making in the county could be adduced, but we have only space for dealing with the iron manufacture of the immediate locality. Bilston was famous for its locksmiths, general smiths, chape filers, &c., as far back as the time of Henry IV, at which early period coal was used for the purposes of manufacture, as will be shown when we treat of the coal trade. In the 17th century, according to the entries in the Church Registers, the bulk of the population must have been engaged in the fabrication of iron, in one form or other. The *Mettalum Martis* of Dud Dudley, printed in the reign of James I, shows how important an iron district the whole of South Staffordshire had become, "that within ten miles of Dudley Castle

there *be near 20,000 smiths of all sorts*, and many ironworks at that time within that circle decayed for want of wood (yet formerly a mighty woodland country)."

This is a startling statement, and we suspect must not be taken literally. What the author meant probably was that there were 20,000 persons engaged in or connected with the manufacture of iron, and even with this qualification it would still show how vast a trade must in that period have been carried on.

Dud Dudley must ever be remembered with respect, since he it was who first tried to use coal instead of wood and charcoal in the smelting of iron ore—an achievement which John Wilkinson successfully carried out at his Bradley Ironworks in this township. Indeed it is to the latter industrial worthy that England and the world are indebted for the present importance of this supremely valuable manufacture; and it was at Bradley that some of his greatest industrial triumphs were secured. The first "blast" furnace ever erected within this township was erected by Wilkinson in 1767, the first "forge," for the manufacture of wrought-iron, in 1784. Yet such was the rapidity with which the trade developed that, in thirty years, Bilston stood unrivalled as an iron making centre.

One of the greatest improvements which Wilkinson made, one which secured the triumph of the steam engine when repeated failures had almost made Boulton and Watt despair, was the invention of a method for boring cannon perfectly smooth. This invention led to Wilkinson obtaining an immense number of orders from Government for cannon. The invention was important not so much for its effect upon the art of war as upon the arts of peace, for it enabled Watt to make his steam cylinder not only out of iron instead of tin as before, but to make it steam tight, a feat not previously accomplished. In 1775, this invention was made known to Watt, and an interview between the two at once took place. Smiles, in his "Lives of the Engineers," thus refers to it:—

"Boulton had been busily occupied during his (Watt's) absence in experimenting on the Soho engine. A new 18-inch cylinder had been made for it at Bersham by John Wilkinson, the great ironfounder, who had contrived a machine for boring it with accuracy. This cylinder was substituted for the tin one brought

from Kinneil, and other improvements having been introduced, the engine was again set to work with very satisfactory results. Watt found his partner in good spirits; not less elated by the performances than by the passing of the Act [for extending the time of the patent], and arrangements were at once set on foot for the carrying on of the manufacture of engines upon an extensive scale. Applications for terms, followed by orders, shortly came in from the mining districts; and before long the works at Soho were resounding with the clang of hammers and machinery employed in manufacturing steam engines for all parts of the civilised world." From this incident we get a striking illustration of the way in which one invention leads to another. Wilkinson's genius invented an art without which probably the steam engine would have been a failure—at any rate for many years then to come, while Watt's genius provided Wilkinson with an engine which enabled the latter to apply hot blast to the furnace, and so perfect the application of coal as a substitute for charcoal in the making of pig iron. The feebleness of the blast obtainable by the old-fashioned bellows made the smelting of the ore so tedious a process that it was as much as the manufacturer could do to turn out 20 tons a week. Why should not cylinders be devised for forcing air into the furnace by means of the engine. Wilkinson communicated his ideas to Watt, who at once saw the theory was practicable, and, setting to work, an engine was constructed and erected a twelve months after, which answered their utmost expectations. Now came the crucial point. Why should not the great dream of Dud Dudley's life, and of Wilkinson's, too, be realised, and *coal* be made the principal fuel in the smelting of iron. The superior blast from the engine was the hitherto lacking and essential agent. Wilkinson set to work, and speedily triumphed, and the immense mineral resources of the country, previously all but useless, now were made available. The effects produced by the united genius of Boulton, Watt, and Wilkinson were far more astonishing than the most vivid imagination of man could have conceived. At one leap the produce of the Bradley blast furnace was doubled, and a letter of Wilkinson's is preserved, in which he speaks, with pardonable pride, of the fact that the output of his furnace has increased from 20 to 40 tons per week.

In 1830, Bilston is said to have produced more iron in its various blast furnaces, mills and foundries, than the whole kingdom of Sweden,—then one of the foremost nations in Europe for iron-making. In 1862, there were more blast furnaces in Bilston parish alone than in the whole of Staffordshire in 1800, the principal ironmasters then being the Bagnalls, Blackwells, Sparrows, Wards, Joneses, Thorneycrofts, Baldwins, Hickmans, &c. Of these the only representative now engaged in the trade is Sir Alfred Hickman, M.P., whose blast furnace plant stands unrivalled in the county, whose business ability commands respect, and whose productions have a world-wide reputation. A recent addition to the great industrial enterprises of the township is that of the Steel Works erected in 1883 for the manufacture of Bessemer and Siemen's Steel Plates, Bars, Angles, Tees, Girders, &c. These works have a capacity for turning out 40,000 ingots and 30,000 tons of finished steel plates and bars in a year. Sir Alfred Hickman, M.P., is Chairman of the Company.

Important as Bilston was with reference to the manufacture of wrought iron, it was equally important in the cast iron department. Shaw says of this branch of the trade :—"On part of the estate of Barber, of Sumerford—lately sold by him—have long been established the ironworks of J. Wilkinson, Esq., where the main branches of foundry, as well as forge, are carried on upon a large scale, to which great additions and improvements have been recently made, such as separating the dross from the ore by huge concave rollers instead of hammers. A more valuable account, recently communicated, of this great manufactory (where iron boats are made for the canal) has been unfortunately lost."

Vast foundries, where every conceivable article of machinery and skill is made, still exist in this town. The manufactured goods here produced by Thomas Perry & Co., of Highfields,—established in 1806—for excellence of material and workmanship have competed with and rivalled the manufactures of the whole world. The enormous "plants" for the manufacture of steel armour plates for war ships and batteries, have been made here. Huge engines—masterpieces of strength, size, and mechanical superiority—are also numbered among its productions.

The "testing" of the "castings," previous to their being sent from the works to their destination, enables the workmen to detect any unsoundness or faults, and insures to the purchaser a genuine article. Orders are executed for countries situated in every quarter of the globe; nor are our own government orders rare either. The "fire and thief proof safes" made by them have justly attained a wide celebrity. Several monstre safes have been made by this firm for foreign governments, which are wonders of skill, strength, and ingenuity. This firm also does an immense trade in iron and brass bedsteads.

A firm largely employed in the Bedstead trade is that of the Atlas Bedstead Co., who also manufacture Iron Safes and kindred articles, and give employment to a large number of hands.

Other firms of Ironfounders are those of Thomas Holcroft, of the Market Street Works, whose reputation is high in the markets of the country for both Machinery and Ironfoundry goods; and John Hickman & Son, of the Great Western Foundry, makers of all kinds of General Castings, &c.

Among the more recent additions to the ranks of our local iron manufacturers may be mentioned the firm of Messrs. G. Adams & Sons, whose works are now of great size and of the most modern construction. A Galvanizing department has also recently been added.

Though based upon so secure a foundation as that of superior workmanship and quality of material, this, like the other branches of the Iron Trade, has been so beset with the difficulties and cost of transit, that many of the local manufacturers have either retired or been beaten out of the field. Thanks to the exertions of Sir Alfred Hickman, (whose able defence of South Staffordshire Industries before the Railway Commission has just been the admiration of the district,) some concessions have been won, and the burden of railway rates somewhat lightened.

The Coal Trade.

The antiquity of coal getting in this district is established by the existence of ancient shafts, called "Dane's Shafts," and by the frequent application of the Saxon term "Delves," to places

in the locality, meaning a deep hole or pit, hence "to delve" is "to dig." The earliest documentary evidence of the existence of coal mining in the locality occurs in an Inquisition of Edward I, 1272, wherein reference is made to four coal pits of sea coale, worth £4 yearly, in the Manor of Seggesley, probably in Bradley, which is partly in Sedgley parish. The next is from another Inquisition, dated 1291, thus—"Extent of the Manor of Seggesley, by Ralph de Bissebury, Philip de Seggesley, Warine de Payne, William de Everton, Robert Buffon, Harvey de Hampton, Richard Groveyse, John de Mere, Hamon de Trundessole, Richard le Havare, John Hamonde, and John le Dave, who say, 'There is in the said Manor of Seggesley, of rent of assize, £31 14s. There are there iron mines, worth yearly £8. The ploughing of rushes is worth yearly 26s. 7d. The mines of sea coal are worth yearly, 26s. 8d.'"

The next evidence of coal getting in the district occurs in a deed which Juliana de Heronsville granted to her daughter, Johanna de Wednesbyrie, of a piece of land lying in Braddeley, over against "ye cole pitts," A.D. 1315. The Rev. Richard Ames, curate of Bilston (17th century), says, in the church register, "I have been told that coal hath been got in Bilston as far back as 1380, and also that one Humphrey Mattocks was killed, in 1392, while working in a 'cole pitt.'" In a deed, May 24, 1401, by William Perrye de Bylstone to John, his son, mention is made of "a piece of land with ye two 'cole pitts' thereon situate, called 'ye Hollowaye and ye Delves,' situate near Windmille Field, in Bilston."

In another grant made by John Peppard to William Robyns, of Bilston, in 1418, mention is made of "one competent carriage of lande coales, to be drawn by five horses from ye cole pits in ye Upper Horwall, situate neare to Ettingshall."

Leland, the antiquary, who wrote in the reign of Edward VI, tells us "That sea coles abounde nere to Wolverhampton and Wednesbyrie;" and Camden in his *Britannica* says, "The south part of Staffordshire hath coles digged out of the earth, and mines of iron, but whether to their commodity or hindrance I leave to the inhabitants who do and shall better understand it."

This is scarcely such an opinion as would have been expected from a Staffordshire man like the author, but he evidently only reflected the general opinion of his day, when coal was barely tolerated through the prejudices of the times. In the last century an ancient shaft, called a "Dane's Shaft," was discovered in Bilston. It was square in shape, the sides being supported by scantling timber, the depth being about twenty feet. Several ancient tools of iron were found, but so badly oxidised that they were unfortunately thrown away as worthless.

An early instance of coal mining took place in 1490, when three Bilston men named William Tomkys, Thomas Jackson, and Nycolas Foxall, made a search for coal. They began their operations in Moorfields: the task was a novel and tedious one, but success crowned their labours. Their first shaft was square in shape, supported on the sides by scantling timber. The coal was raised by a common windlass. This mine continued to be worked for many years, when it passed into the hands of John Tomkys, a son of the above-mentioned William; in which family it continued until purchased by Mr. Purshouse, in 1640, whose son, Mr. Joseph Purshouse, furnished Dr. Plott with the following account of this mine.

"In South Staffordshire," says the Doctor, "there are twelve or fourteen collieries at work, and twice as many out of work within ten miles round, some of which afford 2,000 tons of coal yearly, others 3,000, and even 5,000 tons. The upper beds, above the ironstone, lie sometimes ten, eleven, and twelve yards thick; nay, I was told by Mr. Purshouse, that in his grounds at Ettingshall, at a place called Moorfields, the bed of coal is fourteen yards thick, inasmuch that some acres of the ground have been sold for £100 an acre. I was informed of one which sold for £150, and well indeed it might be so, for out of a single shaft there has been sometimes drawn £500 worth of coal." The figures of the worthy Doctor, after allowing for the difference in the value of money then and now, would have to undergo considerable transformation before they represented the value of some of the coal mines of the present time. In 1690, coal sold at the pit mouth in South Staffordshire, for 2s.4d. per ton; in 1790, at 4s.6d. per ton; in 1820, at 8s.4d. per ton, and in 1858, at 13s.6d.

The church registers of the locality afford many instances of colliery fatalities. Thus we have in the Bilston Registers, the following :—

		£	s.	d.
"1688.	The charges abt. ye collier att Tho: Wrixam's (injured in coal pit) - -	0	10	0
	Paid to his chirurgeon - - - -	0	2	0
	,, for his pass - - - - -	0	0	6
	For carrying him out of ye town - -	0	2	0
1689.	My charges for ye funerall of ye collier att Wrixam's - - - - - -	0	12	4
	Thos. Wrixam's wife upon ye acct. of ye collier yt died there - - - -	0	2	6

1720. Nov. 26. Memo: yt on Thursday, ye 22nd of this inst. Novr., Wm. Colburne, collier, of Duck Lane, was buried att Wolverhampton. He was said to be aged 96 years.

1725. Wednesday. Richard Allons was buried by me (Mr. Ames) at four o'clock this afternoon. He was killed in a colepit near the Portway Road. He was aged abt. 43 years.

1735. Nov. 25. Buried. Thomas Teese, a collier, killed by a fall of coals in Wolverhampton cole pit.

1756. Feby. 28. Buried. Jane Rowley. She was landing coals at ye pitt-eye, and ye board on which she stood broke. N.B. Ye landing board stands over ye pitt-eye, so that on the breaking of this board she fell to the bottom of ye pitt, and was so much bruised that she died soon after.

1758. Oct. 23. Buried. John Blewer. He was going down into a colepitt in ye work belonging to Mr. Gibbons, of Ettingshall, and ye rope broke, by wch accident he fell to ye bottom of ye pitt and was killed.

1766. John Jones (buried April 15). He was killed in a coalpitt by a fall of coles.

1764. George Whitehall (buried). He was killed by a fall of coals in a colepitt."

Until the beginning of the last century the use of carts for conveyance was almost unknown, so that whenever the term "a load of coals" is met with in old records, manuscripts, or books, it must be taken to mean "a horse load." In this district pack-horses were trained to carry a large box or basket on either side, each large enough to hold about two hundredweight. Long strings of these animals, as well as of donkeys and mules, were to be seen slowly wending their way over the wretched ways from the collieries to the towns. Sometimes the drivers had to plunge into deep holes up to the knees; but as Macadam was unborn, and parish authorities only looked after the "causeys" within the towns, there was no remedy. In winter time the roads were frequently impassable, and then woe to the improvident householder whose stock of fuel was low; for he had to turn out and gather wood from the hedgerows and copses, which at that time were plentiful all over the district. The collieries of South Staffordshire supplied the whole of the adjacent counties, and files of horses laden with coals were to be met with as far away as Coventry, Stourbridge, Wellington, and Macclesfield. When long journeys like these were undertaken the expense was reduced by putting one driver in charge of several horses, and providing relays at given distances. The cost of coal thus conveyed was, of course, considerably increased, doubled in fact, but the scarcity of wood, and the dearness of charcoal, had made coal a necessity. At the same period the winding gear was of the simplest kind, such, indeed, as the Romans themselves must have used, being the trunk of a tree stripped of its bark, placed across uprights, and turned round by handles. To this trunk was attached the rope, and to the rope a square wooden box capable of holding some four or five hundredweights of coal. The gin, worked by a horse, was a last century invention, which was followed by the "whimsey," when Watt succeeded in the manufacture of steam engines. All these methods of raising coal to the surface are still to be met with in the Black Country, but the antiquity of the windlass is little suspected by the ordinary observer.

From the time of Plott mining operations gradually increased until Bilston grew famous both for the quality of its coal, and the superiority of its ironstone. More coal has been

extracted from the mines of this township than probably from those of any other town in the kingdom. It is estimated that during the year 1864, no less than 10,000,000 tons of coal were raised in the district, of which Bilston forms the centre.

The following statement of the produce of the mines in Bilston, in the year 1827, is taken from the parish assessment book for that year:—

Name.	*Tons per annum.*	*Name.*	*Tons per annum.*
Joseph Hickman	2,600	R. Cross	3,120
Joseph Maybury	3,120	E. Wooley	3,820
T. B. Price	1,560	B. Bickley	6,240
Job Hartshorn	3,120	Stanford & Co.	6,240
Mrs. Walker	34,320	Mr. Fryer	3,120
William Ward	21,120	Mr. Loxdale	20,280
Messrs. Sparrow	31,200	Exors. of Wilkinson	2,600
J. F. Ferriday	28,600	J. Addenbrook	6,240
P. Williams	10,400	Scott & Foley	62,400
Mr. Bagnall	7,800	Messrs. Breretons	7,800
Mr. Robyns	9,360	W. Smith	6,240
Adam Hill	3,120	T. Banks	29,720
William Riley	2,600		
			Total—316,740

Now, very little coal is raised, indeed, and no ironstone; for the coal mines have nearly all become water-logged by the mistaken policy of the Mines Drainage Commissioners, under which policy the existing water-engines were allowed to be dismantled, and new ones (insufficient in number) had to be erected in their place. In 1860, the population of Bilston included 2,000 miners; to-day, barely 200 live in the township.

Lockmaking.

Lockmaking was carried on in Bilston at an early period—but was never very extensively engaged in. In 1590, there were three families of master locksmiths—the Perrys, the Kempsons, and the Tomkyses—but they employed but few workmen. From 1590 to 1720, the trade seems to have been no further extended. It was evident that Bilston was not the true home of this branch of native industry—Willenhall was the real town of locks and keys, and so remains. In 1760, however, the number of locksmiths had increased to eight, but probably the number of hands employed was not materially greater than before. In 1790, a Mr. Isaac Mason, of Bilston, invented the present method of

pressing various parts of the locks by means of the "fly" press; but in 1796, he was induced to leave Bilston for Willenhall, where he carried on a lucrative business for many years. The late Mr. Brueton, of this town, introduced many improvements in locks. He died in 1844, much respected by all who knew him. He left the residue of his estate (after payment of several legacies) to be divided among the following charitable institutions, viz. :— Wolverhampton and Staffordshire General Hospital, Birmingham General Hospital, Queen's Hospital, Deaf and Dumb Asylum, both of Birmingham; British and Foreign Bible Society, London Missionary Society, Wesleyan Missionary Society, each of which institutions received about £1,200. After the death of Mr. Brueton the lock trade gradually fell into neglect, and now has become entirely extinct.

Japanning and Kindred Trades.

The art of japanning is not of ancient standing in this country, being practically unknown until the latter end of the 17th century, when japanned goods were brought over from Japan, and imitated by English artists. Next to Pontypool, Bilston was the earliest home of this manufacture, which was carried on in a small way as early as the year 1710. That we are not asserting what cannot be proved is evident from the following extracts from St. Leonard's Registers:

"1719. April 9. Baptized. John, ye son of Samel Stone, Japanner.

1754. Feby. 1. Buried. Edward Careless, one of ye Chapell wardens of Bilston, for ye present year. Mr. Careless's death was occasioned by ye following melancholy accident. On Saturday, ye 19th of January, about two o'clock in ye afternoon, he went into his stove room to examine a vessel of spirit varnish that was heating in one of his stoves, and unfortunately pulling out ye cork, ye spirits took fire, and with great fury burst over him in flames, and as it was some minutes before he had any assistance, his head, neck, face, breasts, shoulders, and arms were burnt in a terrible manner. His wounds, however, digested well, and

> he began to heal in a kind manner, but it is supposed that ye nerves of ye head were injured by ye fire, and that ye meringes were inflamed, and brought on delirium on the seventh day, and upon Tuesday, January 29th, betwixt six and seven in ye evening, he died, in ye 28th year of his age."

In these two extracts we see that japanning and its kindred trade varnish-making were carried on at an early period in the town. The first japanners worked upon different materials from those now employed. Like the Japanese their first articles were made of wood and then lacquered and varnished. These consisted of small tea trays referred to by Pope, in his "Rape of the Lock"—

> "On shining altars of Japan, they raise
> The silver lamp."——

wooden snuff boxes, snuffer stands, and the usual fancy articles, so familiarly known as Japanese goods. But wood was soon found to be unsuitable, and a softer material, known as papier-mâché, was invented in 1773. This was a few years after almost discarded for iron, a process of rolling having been invented by Wilkinson, which enabled the ironworkers to roll iron into thin sheets, from which an infinite variety of articles could be manufactured both for purposes of ornament and utility. One of the earliest and most ingenious of local manufacturers was a Mr. Hartill, whose house and shop stood, until a few years ago, midway between the Bull's Head, on the Wolverhampton Road, and Priestfield. This worthy invented several improved methods of ornamentation, which both facilitated the processes, and cheapened the cost. He had for an apprentice, Mr. Gerard Barber, the founder of the oldest existing firm in the trade, that of Messrs. G. & J. Lawley, of Market Street. To Mr. Barber, and his son-in-law, Mr. Richard Lawley, the trade is indebted for the introduction of cork-cutting, and the process of "transferring."

Another old firm in this trade is that of Chapman & Co., Ld., (formerly Farmer & Chapman), of the Caledonian Japan and Hollow-ware Works. This firm produces a considerable quantity of high class goods in both departments of its business, and have an extensive connection with consumers in all parts of the world.

In point of time, perhaps, the Batchcroft Works, formerly belonging to Messrs. J. & W. H. Baker comes next. Messrs. Baker commenced business in the year 1851, and were the first to introduce into the town the manufacture of bright block tin goods. In 1891 the partnership was dissolved by mutual consent, Mr. W. H. Baker becoming sole proprietor, and he now carries on the business, being assisted by his two sons Mr. Willis Baker and Mr. James Baker.

A very old Japan manufactory formerly belonging to Messrs. Dean is the Crown Tin and Japan Works, now belonging to Mr. John Froggatt. The buildings are of considerable extent, and the proprietor manufactures all kinds of japanned goods and tin wares, such as coal vases, trunks, toilets, bowls, baskets, &c., the machinery employed being of the newest and most adequate kind.

Another very old Japanning works, formerly carried on by Barker & Co., is the Beehive Works in Tame Street, now owned by the "Old Beehive Company."

At the Carlton Works of Messrs. Seager & Co.—a more recent addition to the Japan industry of the town—a great variety of goods of the ordinary kinds are got up, and to these must be added several specialities which command a ready sale in the Birmingham market.

Another factory of a similar kind is that of the Britannia Japan Works, of which Mr. James Bird is the proprietor. Mr. Bird was formerly a partner with Mr. James Jones at the Beehive Works, but on the dissolution of the partnership some years ago, started the present concern. He is the manufacturer of the usual classes of japanned goods.

Another well known firm is that of Messrs. Smith & Lidington, of the Earl Street Works, of which Mr. F. G. Lidington is the sole proprietor. The goods manufactured by this firm are of good quality and of the usual variety.

The firm of Mr. James Motlow, Japanner and Galvanizer, carries on a large business at the works in Dudley Street, where a large number of hands are employed in both departments.

An important firm engaged in these allied trades of Japanning and Tin Plate working is that of Messrs. Scott & Harris, the Star Japan Company. This firm manufactures a very large variety of goods, both of the best and common qualities to suit all markets.

Messrs. Bradley & Co., of the Mount Pleasant Works, manufacture very largely all kinds of Galvanized Goods, and their productions bear a good reputation among consumers.

A firm well-known in the trade for the manufacture of tin-plate goods, but especially of steel trunks, is that of Messrs. T. Johnson & Co., of the Princess Street Works. The business has been carried on here for more than half a century, originally by Mr. Anthony Hyde, subsequently by Mr. E. H. Busby, a nephew of the above, who brought out several new patents, and materially enlarged the business. The cash box branch developed so much that new premises had to be erected. In recent years the demand for cash boxes has materially slackened through the growth of the "safe" trade, and its more modern substitute "check tills," now so generally used by tradesmen. The travelling trunk trade, however, took the place of the cash boxes as an article of manufacture, and now the existing firm carry on an extensive business in this class of goods. Mrs. Busby after her husband's death married Mr. T. Johnson, who took over the business. In 1878 Mr. G. H. Shackleton the present principal became manager, and since then the business has grown so much that the firm has recently taken to the works formerly carried on by Messrs. T. Jones & Son, in Cambridge Street. It will thus be seen that the Japan trade and its congeners play a very important part in the industrial resources of the township.

The Hollow-ware Trade, &c.

Among the chief manufactories of the town should be mentioned the Albert Street Works of Messrs. Joseph Sankey & Sons, who are now large makers of wrought-iron stamped and pressed hollow-ware, comprising frying pans, basins, bowls, milk pans, baking tins, tea kettles, shovels, &c., besides various special descriptions of iron stampings for the different Foreign and

Colonial markets, such as rice bowls, dished sheets, &c., as well as paint kegs and oil drums, for which they have special machinery and plant adapted to the rapid turning out of large quantities. The oldest branch of their business is the manufacture of blank trays and waiters, which is peculiarly a Bilston trade, being closely allied to the japanning trade, for which the town has long been noted. The business was founded many years ago in a small blank tray manufactory, near High Street, which was owned by Messrs. Hartill and Jackson, and was eventually transferred to its present site, in 1854, where new premises were built and the business continued on a more extended scale by Messrs. Jackson and Sankey. This partnership was afterwards dissolved, and the works, passing into Mr. Sankey's sole possession, were from time to time enlarged to meet the growing demands of a steadily increasing business, until they are now among the largest works in Bilston, and are replete with modern machinery and appliances adapted for a large and rapid turnover. In 1878, Mr. Sankey took into partnership his eldest son, Mr. John William Sankey, who had for some years previously taken an active part in the management, and who on the death of Mr. Joseph Sankey, in 1886, took over the entire control of the business. In this year, the old-established business of the late Mr. J. P. Whitehead, blank tray manufacturer, of Bow Street, was bought by Messrs. Sankey, and ceased to exist as a separate concern. Since March, 1891, when Mr. Fred. E. Sankey, and Mr. George H. Sankey were admitted into partnership, they also have shared in the management. In 1890, the firm patented a new process for the decoration of tin plates, and during the last two years an entirely new branch has been added in the manufacture by this process of their patent "*Neptune Art Ware,*" comprising trays, waiters, candlesticks, bread baskets, &c., in various shapes and of different designs. There has always been a cordial relationship subsisting between the firm and its employees, of which a substantial proof is afforded by the erection and furnishing early this year of a large and comfortable room, which is given to the workmen for their own use as a Mess Room and Recreation Room, and in connection with this a Workmen's Library has been founded.

The air pipe business conducted by Messrs. W. Lewis & Son, General Sheet Iron and Steel Workers, Mount Pleasant Works, was commenced in the year 1840 by the late Mr. William Lewis, (who in the year 1880 took into partnership his son Mr. R. D. Lewis,) and is at the present time one of the most important of its character in Bilston, amongst their chief productions are Colliery Air Pipes for ventilation, and a variety of other goods in both Steel and Iron. During the past year it has been found necessary to rebuild most of their premises which are modern and well arranged. The business is now being carried on by Mr. Robert D. Lewis, the sole proprietor.

Among the industries congregated in the district of Bradley near Bilston, mention must be made of that of Mr. Matthew H. Kinsey, Norton Washer Works. The business was founded in 1865, by the late Richard Thomas, and for the last six years has been under the proprietorship of Mr. Kinsey. These works have long maintained a world-wide reputation for the manufacture of all kinds of Iron and Steel Washers, Axle, Buffer and Bedstead Plates, Bucket and Waterloo Ears, etc.

One of the important Trades of the neighbourhood is that of the manufacture of Cast Iron Hollow-wares or Culinary utensils. The leading firm in this business is the "Cannon" Hollow-ware Co., Ltd., of the Cannon Iron Foundry, at Deepfields. These works were established in the year 1826, by the late Edward Sheldon. They are conveniently situated with every advantage of Railway and Canal accommodation, etc., and now cover several acres of ground, giving employment to about five hundred hands. In Cooking and Kitchen utensils which are supplied either Tinned or Enamelled as necessity or taste require, their Patterns comprise a most varied and complete collection of goods suitable for home and foreign requirements, which are produced with all the latest improvements including several of their own patented Inventions. The art of Porcelain Enamelling on Cast Iron has been brought to perfection by this firm, as is evidenced by their Sanitary department, which turns out great quantities of Baths, Lavatories, Wash Bowls, Closet Hoppers, Kitchen Sinks, etc., which formerly were almost entirely produced in Pottery Ware.

The advantages of Cast Iron Enamelled goods as compared with Earthenware is obvious, as great strength and durability is obtained. Of 3-legged or Kaffir Pots and similar Castings this firm has in its career produced many millions of articles, being the largest makers in England of this class of goods. In their household and Builders' Ironmongery departments they produce Cast Butt Hinges, Patent Sash Pulleys, Sink Traps, Sad Irons, Weights, Patent Charcoal Box Irons, and Coffee Mills, and a variety of other goods too numerous to mention. The Company's manufactures enjoy a high reputation and are well-known throughout the markets of the world, and they have been awarded Gold and other Medals at International Exhibitions for the general excellence of their productions.

Another large firm is that trading under the style of Thomas Sheldon & Co., Springvale Foundry, Wolverhampton, who in addition to General Castings manufacture Tinned and Enamelled Cast Iron Hollow-ware for the foreign markets exclusively. The founder, Thomas Sheldon, commenced business as an Ironfounder at Ladymoor in 1853, but owing to mining operations the works were removed to Springvale in 1879, in which year he died. The business has since been carried on by his widow, who took into partnership her son-in-law, Mr. Joseph Millington, under whose management the works have increased more than fourfold.

A Hollow-ware works of great size has within the last few years been erected at Ettingshall by Messrs. T. Holcroft & Sons. Some hundreds of hands are here employed—a large addition to the works having been made two years ago. Of this establishment Mr. Harold Holcroft has the active management.

A position of the greatest importance in the industrial circles of Bilston is held by the establishment of Messrs. Ralph & Jordan, Beehive Works. They are manufacturers and patentees of Tinned and Galvanized Wrought Iron Hollow-ware, and makers of 'Alpine' high class Cycles. Their works are advantageously situated and are of modern and substantial construction. They cover altogether about an acre and a half of ground, and are divided into different departments suitable to the business, viz.,—large tin

and galvanizing shops, finishing shops, warehouses for show, stock, packing and sorting rooms and offices, etc. The ranges of shopping are replete throughout with every description of machinery of the best type and improved appliances. Nearly two hundred hands are employed. Messrs. Ralph & Joadan are also makers of The Universal Enamelled Iron Goods, a new industry for Bilston, and the only one of its kind in the township.

At Ettingshall in this parish a very important trade is carried on by Messrs. W. Lewis & Sons, who employ some hundreds of hands in the manufacture of all kinds of gas, boiler, and water tubes, and whose reputation as makers of superior goods is very wide spread.

The iron trade has in recent years been in a state of continual decay, the works now engaged in it not being half so numerous as they were 30 years ago. There are, however, still a goodly number in existence, though the staple production in finished iron now is sheets, mostly for home consumption in the local tin-plate and galvanized trades. Among the firms engaged in the manufacture of iron may be mentioned Messrs. Hattons, Ltd., (who are also makers of steel); The Ettingshall Iron Co.; Molineaux & Jordan, of the Capponfield Works; Mr. John Harris, of the Britannia Works; Evans & Co., of Bradley New Ironworks; J E. East & Co., of the Tar Ovens Works; Tupper & Co., of the Regent Works and Batman's Hill Works; The Moorcroft Sheet Iron Co.; Stephen Thompson & Co., of the Manor Warks—an important concern; and Messrs. T. & I. Bradley, pig iron makers, of the Capponfield Furnaces. Under this heading may also be included the following important firms of iron and steel boiler manufacturers, viz:—Messrs. John and William Thompson, of the Highfield Boiler Works, Ettingshall; and Thompson Brothers, of the Bradley Boiler Works. At both these works, particularly at the former, a large number of hands are employed.

The Pottery Trade.

At Mount Pleasant a large Pottery was established a few years ago, where all kinds of Pottery and Art Ware are manufactured. The business which is carried on under the name of the Myatt Pottery Co., was originally located at Bradley in the

township, where it was for more than half a century in the hands of the Myatt family. On its removal to Bilston a superior class of articles was manufactured and now some very beautiful art works can be obtained, worthy of being placed in the drawing room or boudoir. Messrs. G. B. & D. Thorneycroft are now the proprietors.

The Bradley Pottery is one of the oldest in the district, having been erected more than a century ago by Wilkinson, the great ironmaster, and has been carried on in succession by Jackson, Myatt & Wild, Myatt, Bew, and at the present time by Messrs. A Turner & Sons, who make a large variety of Salt Glazed Stone Ware for chemical and domestic use, Bristol Glazed Bottles, Jars, Rockingham Tea Pots, Yellow Ware, Garden Pots, Porous Cells, &c.

It was thought some years ago on the flooding of the mines and the gradual removal of the iron trade to more favoured localities that the industrial prosperity of Bilston was in serious peril, and that the town would sink again into its ancient proportions. For a time a decrease of population actually occurred, and a commercial panic seemed inevitable. But the introduction of new trades checked the decline before much mischief had been wrought.

FINIS.

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